LADY-BIRD.

A TALE.

BY

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ
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"With caution judge of possibility;
Things thought unlikely, e'en impossible,
Experience often shows us to be true."

SHAKESPEARE.

LADY-BIRD.

VOL. I.

CHAPTER I.

"Gloom is upon thy silent hearth
O silent house! . . . .
Sorrow is in the breezy sound
Of thy tall beeches whisp'ring round;
The shadow of long mournful hours
Hangs dim upon thy early flowers,
Even in thy sunshine seems to brood
Something more deep than Solitude."

MRS. HEMANS.

"Come to the woods in whose mossy dells
A light all made for the poet dwells;
There is light, there is youth, there is tameless mirth
Where the streams and the lilies they wear have birth.
Joyous and free shall your wanderings be
As the flight of birds o'er the glittering sea.
Come forth, O ye children of gladness, come,
Where the violets lie may be now your home —
Away from the chamber and the sullen hearth
The young winds are dancing in breezy mirth,
Their light stems thrill to the wild wood strains.
* * * * *
Bring the lyre and the wreath and the joyous lay,
Come forth to the sunshine." . . . .

Ibid.

THE old manorial residence of Lifford Grange was one of those habitations which have remained in the

same family for many centuries, which have been two or three times rebuilt in the course of a thousand years, and each time have retained some portion of the old mansion; the new one, as it was called, being — at the period of which we speak — about as deserving of that appellation as the Pont-Neuf at Paris, which happens to be the oldest of all the bridges that span the Seine. An avenue of yews led up to the house; on each side of these sepulchral-looking trees was a row of fine beeches, whose light foliage contrasted with the hue and mitigated the gloom of the more solemn evergreens. "La parure de l'hiver et le deuil de l'été."

The immediate approach to the house was through a square court equally divided by the carriage-road, on each side of which were two patches of grass, one of them adorned by a sun-dial on which the sun never shone, and the other by the dry bason of a fountain into which four hideous Tritons peeped, as if in the vain hope of discovering water in its recesses. On the other side of the house there were broad gravel walks, and an extensive garden — if anything so flowerless could deserve the name. A river that looked like a canal divided it from the flat extent beyond. Deeply and sullenly flowed this stream, which had not the beauty of clearness although the rank weeds in its bed were easily discerned. There was neither life nor spirit in its rapidity: sullenly and silently it hurried

along, as if in haste to exchange the open space it had to traverse for the shade of a dark thicket which lay between the park and the river into which it was about to flow.

The most ardent admirer of old-fashioned places must have owned that there was something melancholy in the aspect of Lifford Grange, with its massive walls, its heavy portals, its projecting windows, all unadorned by the smallest sprig of jessamine, the least invasion of ivy, the slightest familiar touch of daring tendril or aspiring creeper. The interior of the house corresponded with the exterior. It had large drawing-rooms, and furniture which it would have required a giant's strength to move, light-excluding windows and unapproachable fire-places. Heavy red woollen curtains descended to the floor in cumbrous folds. A regiment abreast might have marched up the stair-case, and moderate-sized houses have been built within the bed-rooms. There was a certain kind of grandeur about the old Grange, and none of the usual appendages of such a place were absolutely wanting, but there was a total absence of comfort in its arrangements, and of charm in its aspect both within and without.

The character of the owner seemed stamped upon its walls, and inscribed on its portal. Mr. Lifford's family was as ancient as his house, and his pride as lofty as his rooms. He was the last descendant of a race which had clung to the Catholic church, through

the ages of persecution, with a fidelity which had given him an hereditary attachment to a religion, the precepts of which he did not observe, the spirit of which he certainly did not exhibit. He had no enemies, for he kept too much aloof from others to interfere with them, or to be interfered with himself. There was a kind of dignity and smooth coldness about him which repelled without rudeness, and chilled without offending. It would have been equally difficult to affront or to flatter him; his heart (if he had one) was a sealed book which his few associates had never read; none knew if its pages were inscribed with fair or foul characters, or were as blank as the handsome immoveable face that formed, as it were, its title page.

During a journey that he made into Spain soon after coming of age, he had married a Spanish girl of a family as ancient as his own. She was an orphan, and her guardians readily bestowed her hand on the young Englishman; whose quarterings, wealth, and religious profession answered the conditions they deemed indispensable to a union with a daughter of their house. Angustia was her name; on the day of her marriage it sounded in strange contrast with the beauty of her face and the brilliancy of her prospects; — a very few years later, when a pale, suffering, and hopelessly infirm woman took possession of an apartment on the ground floor at Lifford Grange, from which she never emerged but to take a few turns in a garden chair on

the sunny side of the house, it seemed more in accordance with her destiny.

The first years of her marriage had been spent in Spain, and during that time she had two children, a girl called Gertrude and a boy two years younger. Soon after the birth of this last child, she and her husband came to England; and at about the same period a paralytic stroke deprived her of the use of her limbs, while a complication of diseases reduced her to a state of almost continual suffering, and withdrew her entirely from society. Her husband shut himself up more and more in a proud retirement from the world, unsolaced, as it appeared, in that haughty seclusion by any engrossing pursuit or the performance of any active duties. The only inmate of his house was his uncle, who had been educated in Spain, had there received holy orders, and since his nephew's return to England had inhabited the Grange and fulfilled there the office of domestic chaplain, occasionally assisting the priest of the neighbouring village of Stonehouseleigh. His nature might have originally been cast in the same mould as his nephew's; his manner indeed was rougher and more abrupt — but in his case the rock had been smitten, the rugged bark had been softened, the ice had been melted by that light which never shines in vain on the human heart, by that fire against which no adamant is proof, and which no natural bias can resist. That he *had* a heart no one

could have doubted who had witnessed his solicitude, his almost paternal kindness for the pale invalid, who seldom conversed with any one but him, and who had no other comforter or friend.

Her apartment was the least gloomy in the house, but at the same time its aspect was of the gravest character. A few valuable Spanish pictures hung on its walls, a large crucifix in carved ivory stood opposite to her couch, and some books of devotion, with heavy clasps and rich bindings, were always lying within her reach. A bed of mignonette sent its sweet sober smell into this room, where, during the brief hours of winter sunshine, or the long afternoons of summer, wrapped in Indian shawls and propped up by cushions, she would sit at the window, her eyes fixed with an earnest and singular expression on the dull landscape, or the pale northern sky. The illness which had brought her to a premature old age had also slightly impaired her speech and affected her memory, and hence she had not learned to speak English fluently.

This and the continual sufferings she endured had isolated her more and more from her children. She sent for them now and then, and silently pressed them to her heart, or for hours watched them at play on the terraces near her window; but there was little intercourse between them and herself. They bounded by her in all the recklessness of youth and health.

They sometimes stopped to kiss her in that half-fond half-impatient manner with which children return caresses which detain them from their sports. She had nothing wherewith to attract them but a love which was almost too timid to show itself. A barrier seemed to rise between her and those impetuous young spirits which were rushing into all the fulness of that life which was decaying within her; but who could count the prayers which rose from that lonely heart for those she scarcely dared to love as other mothers love? — who can tell what mysterious deliverances from danger — what sudden arrests on the border of an abyss — what softenings of the heart when maddened by passion — what strange reactions from evil and aspirations towards heaven — may have been, in after life, the result of those prayers poured forth on a bed of pain by one who hardly counted in her children's existence, and the pressure of whose feeble hand was often the only token she could give them of her love?

Once a day her husband came to see her, and sat by her for a few minutes. His presence seemed to impart a chill to the very atmosphere. Mrs. Lifford mechanically drew her shawl tighter on her breast during these visits, and her face became paler than at other times. Sealed were the secrets of those two hearts; how little or how much they had cared for each other none of those about them seemed to know, "*rien ne se ressemble comme le néant et la profondeur.*"

The smooth surface of that monotonous existence might have covered a volcano, or concealed an abyss.

The children of this marriage were strangely unlike each other. Born under the same roof, growing up amongst the same influences, they early exhibited the most striking dissimilarity of character and of manners. Edgar was a fair and gentle boy, whose placid gaiety no grave faces could subdue, and no dull mode of life affect. Docile and pliable, he readily received every impression, and adopted all the opinions which his father put forward. If Mr. Lifford cared for anything in the world, it was for his son. He talked to him of his ancestors, of his possessions, of the various honours which had been conferred on his family in past times, the alliances they had made, the historical records in which their names were emblazoned, the rank they held in the estimation of all who valued the real nobility of an ancient descent above the paltry distinction of a modern title; and the child's large blue eyes expanded with wonder and admiration at the greatness of all the Liffords that had been, that were now, and that would be hereafter. He felt an innocent surprise at belonging himself to that favoured race, and a sincere compassion for those whose ancestors had not been Crusaders, whose quarterings were defective, and whose genealogy was imperfect. There was truth and goodness in the nature of that child; and if, in his father's teaching, there

had been something akin to it — a touch of feeling or a spark or a spark of enthusiasm — they might have kindled a noble ambition, and if in some respects visionary, would yet have taught a lesson which has redeemed from contempt many an illusion, and exalted many a delusion. "*Noblesse oblige!*" — that old French motto — would have been the source of generous sentiments, the spur to high achievements; but pride in its coldest and hardest form, and in its most miserable proportions, was learnt as a lesson and adopted as a theory by a mind which it served to narrow, though it did not pervert it.

But there was another mind and another heart of a far different stamp than that of Edgar, which was impressed, indeed, but never moulded by these teachings. It would have been difficult to determine whether the tacit antagonism which had established itself between Gertrude and her father was the result or the cause of the dislike he seemed to have taken to her. Was it because he did not love the foreign-looking girl whose beauty might have gratified the most fastidious paternal vanity, that she never, from her earliest childhood, adopted his views, imbibed his prejudices, or seemed impressed by his stateliness? — or did he not love her because she was proud, though with a different kind of pride than his own: daring and untractable in spite of her slender form and delicate organisation; and because her self-cultivated intellect

exercised itself in independent thought, and even in disguised sarcasm? If for a moment he unbended in conversation with his son, his rigidity returned the instant she entered the room, or that the sound of her voice reached his ear. Was it accidental, or from a strange instinct of revenge for his coldness, that, when scarcely old enough to appreciate the meaning of her words, she seemed to take pleasure in holding cheap all distinctions of rank, all ancestral pride, all the order of ideas with which her brother's ductile mind had been so easily impressed? Almost before she could speak plainly, she had sung about the house — as if in defiance of the old family pictures, which seemed to frown upon her — the old rhyme which had marvellously taken her fancy:

> "When Adam delved, and Eve span,
> Where was then the gentleman?"

As she grew older, she sneered at heraldry, irreverently laughed at coats-of-arms, put embarrassing questions to Father Lifford, as to the real value of such distinctions in a religious point of view, — wondered if the apostles could have proved sixteen quarterings; and, in reading history, it was always the interest of the people, the cause of Liberty — whether in the just acceptation of the word, or in the perverted sense in which it has too often been misapplied — that aroused her sympathy, and awoke her enthusiasm. The misfortunes of kings, the heroism of loyalty, the

prestige of great names, had not the same power to move her; and her brother — not in malice, but in the simplicity of his indignation — often repeated to his father and to his uncle what appeared to him her enormities in these respects; and the cold contempt of the former, the dogmatic manner in which the latter condemned them, without giving an explanation or permitting an appeal, only confirmed impressions which a more condescending treatment might have effaced.

Obliged to be silent at home on such topics, Gertrude often gave vent to her feelings when in the society of the only companions which chance had placed within her reach. At an early age a severe illness endangered her life, and during her convalescence the doctor had insisted on her associating more with other children, as the only means of checking the premature developement of her mind, and diverting her from the incessant reading which was rapidly exhausting her mental and physical strength. Father Lifford, to whom the question was referred, suggested that Mary Grey, a little girl a year or two older than herself, and the daughter of a widow who lived in the village of Stonehouseleigh with whom he had been acquainted several years, would be the fittest resource in such an emergency. He was aware how carefully Mrs. Redmond had brought up her child, and also the one which her second husband had bequeathed to her care, when — after a few months marriage — he had died, leaving

her poorer than before, and with two children to support instead of one.

Indeed, it was supposed by those who knew most of Mrs. Grey that, when she consented to marry Maurice Redmond, a poor artist whose face bore the impress of consumption, whose heart had been nearly broken by the loss of a beautiful young wife — an Italian singer — and whose last days were embittered by anxiety about his little son, it was not in ignorance or in recklessness that she did so; but that if her heart had been touched and her feelings interested, it had been more through that pity which is akin to love, than from any more romantic motive; that she well knew how few were the days of happiness that awaited her — if indeed with that knowledge a thought of happiness could exist — but that she also knew that she thus gained the right of soothing those few days of lingering life, and of seeing a smile on the pale lips of the dying man when he heard his little boy call her mother.

Everybody said it was like Mrs. Grey to make such a marriage, and this was true. It was very like her, whether those who said it shrugged their shoulders as they spoke, or had a tear in their eye. She made many sacrifices, and worked hard in different ways to make the ends of her small income meet. Maurice always called her his mother, and when they were children it was almost impossible to make him and

Mary understand that they were not brother and sister. The large village or small town of Stonehouseleigh, where they lived, was about a mile and a half distant from Lifford Grange. It consisted of one long street, on one side of which flowed the same stream that passed through the gardens of the Grange, now widened into a river, and on the other side rose some hills to whose breezy heights and sunny nooks an abundance of gorse, of heath, of sweet-smelling thyme, and of shining blackberries attracted the steps of little wanderers from the town.

Mrs. Redmond's cottage was on the outskirts of the High Street. Every inch of the small garden that separated it from the road was encumbered with flowers; lilacs and laburnums, Guelder roses and seringa, dahlias and holly-hocks succeeded each other in endless variety. Convolvulus and heartsease struggled together, sweet-briar and jessamine hustled each other. They overran the paths, and climbed to the windows. Roses, also, in all their rich and common variety, not the pale hectic tea rose, or the triumph of horticultural art and Nature's degradation, the black rose, but the glorious blooming cabbage rose, the beautiful moss rose, the lovely blush rose lent their perfume to the air, and their bright colours to the aspect of the little garden.

Mrs. Redmond had lived in Normandy at the time of her first marriage, and had imported thence a number of rose-cuttings, and a great respect for tisanes, those

simple medicines of the French peasantry. There were few of her poor neighbours who had not applied to her for remedies against their various ailments, and if her skill was not always successful, her tender charity and sympathy were seldom unavailing. Gertrude Lifford's acquaintance with Mary Grey, when once it had begun, soon ripened into intimacy. For some weeks they played together every day in the gardens of the Grange; and, when she was quite recovered, she often walked to the cottage, and persuaded her maid to leave her there while she visited her own friends in the village. Maurice Redmond, as well as Mary Grey, looked forward to these visits with the delight which children feel in companions whose society is an unexpected pleasure, an unlooked-for event. Edgar sometimes came with his sister, and they met in their walks on the hillocks of the downs and the green alleys of the Chase. Some of the village children were occasionally called upon to join in their sports, which were at once of an active and of an imaginative character. Gertrude was the chief object, actor, and ruler in these childish pastimes. Her beauty, intelligence, and waywardness exacted a sort of homage which they all instinctively paid her. The high-spirited Maurice, the gentle Mary, the shy daughters of the tenant of Leigh House Farm, and the sturdy boys of the gamekeeper at the Lodge owned her sway, and submitted to all her caprices. If there was a dispute

about the distance between the pink thorn and the acacia-tree — which was to be the starting-point and the goal of a race — it was her verdict that settled the question. If they played at holding a mimic court, she was always the Queen, and thrones of moss were erected, and crowns of wild flowers woven for her girlish majesty.

They called her "Lady-Bird," — a name which Maurice had given her one day, when after a quarrel he sought to appease her. She had been bent on some rash experiment, against which Mary had remonstrated; provoked at her interference, the impatient little beauty had pointed to a sober-looking insect on an ivy-leaf, exclaiming at the same time, "You are like that dull moth, Mary!" At that moment a gorgeous butterfly, with gold and purple wings, had dived in the bosom of a red rose in her hand, and Mary rejoined, "And you are like that gay butterfly;" but Maurice cried out, "No, Mary is a humble-bee, and you a stinging wasp!" Upon which the offended beauty burst into tears, and to make his peace with her, he had called her "Lady-Bird." There was something appropriate in this name.

She was, in a restricted sense, the only little lady amongst them. In her looks and in her manner, there was a mixture of reserve and vivacity, of impetuosity and timidity, which answered to it singularly. She looked so proudly and so gracefully shy if a stranger

addressed her; she was so passionate and easily ruffled, so pretty in her anger and eloquent in her wrath, wild in her mirth and restless in her movements. All the children in the neighbourhood soon knew her by that name, even though they were not — like Mary and Maurice—her associates and play-fellows. The urchins at the cottage doors used to call out as she passed, "There goes the Lady-Bird." As time went on, the intercourse between Gertrude Lifford and Mrs. Redmond's children became more habitual. It was far more so than any one was aware of, except the maid who accompanied her in her walks. Her father knew nothing of it, and her uncle had no idea of its extent, or that Maurice was as often her playmate as Mary.

He was one of those boys who show early the gifts with which Nature has endowed them, whose genius is apparent to the most common observer, to whom everything seems easy, and nothing unattainable. With few facilities for education, he had managed to learn a great deal. He had read all the books within his reach, and at the age of thirteen had made himself acquainted with most of the principal English writers, especially the poets; had learned some Latin and some French, and made such progress in music — which had been his father's and his mother's art—that many of those who heard him play the organ and the pianoforte augured for him the distinctions, the advantages, and sufferings of an artist's life. He met with great

kindness in the neighbourhood. Books were lent him; opportunities of hearing good music afforded him. An organist in a neighbouring town gave him gratuitous instruction.

But from the first moment that he became acquainted with the little girl from Lifford Grange, the beautiful Lady-Bird of his childhood, a new impetus was given to his imagination. She entered with delight into all the schemes of childish amusement which his fancy could suggest. He entertained her, her little brother, and Mary with stories which he remembered or invented about Knights and Princesses, Fairies and Enchanters; with verses which — though rude and incorrect — were not without a vein of poetic genius. He taught them to sing old ballads, to recite poetry, to act historical scenes. All this was particularly congenial to Gertrude's lively imagination. She liked to enact Queen Margaret meeting the Robber in the forest, or Amy Robsart disappearing through the trap-door of the castle; scenes from the "Midsummer Night's Dream," or passages from the life of Robin Hood. But their grandest and favourite performance, reserved for the long summer evenings and the prospect of an uninterrupted holiday, was Campbell's ballad, "O'Connor's Child," dramatized by Maurice to suit their exigencies.

With a bunch of shamrock in his cap and a wooden sword in his belt, he knelt on the greensward to ask

of Edgar the hand of his sister, while the little boy was taught to stammer out in answer —

> "Away, and choose a meaner bride
> Than from O'Connor's house of pride;
> Our name, our tribe, our high degree,
> Are hung in Tara's Psaltery.
> Witness to Eath's victorious brand,
> And Cathal of the bloody hand.
> Glory, I say, and power, and honour,
> Are in the mansion of O'Connor,
> But thou dost bear in hall and field
> A meaner crest upon thy shield."

In what they called the second act, Gertrude, with a veil tied round her head and a cloak loosely thrown on her shoulders, leant her head on her hand and her elbow on a stile, while Maurice sang the lines in which Connocht Moran tempts his mistress to fly with him.

> "Come far from Castle Connor's clans,
> Come with thy belted forester,
> And I, beside the Lake of Swans,
> Will hunt for thee the fallow-deer,
> And build thy hut, and bring thee home
> The wild fowl and the honey-comb."

In the third act of this childish drama they flew together through the green alleys of the Chase, her feet scarcely touching the grass as she ran, repeating —

> "And I pursue by moonless skies
> The light of Connocht Moran's eyes."

Then they stopped under some hazel trees, and built themselves a cabin with the boughs; and he went out to search the game with knife and spear, and she "his evening food to dress would sing to him in happiness,"

"Sweet is to us the hermitage
Of this untried untrodden shore,
Like birds all joyous from the cage,
For man's neglect we love it more."

Then came the fourth act with its death-scene. How tragic they all thought it! In an old hollow tree they sat, Gertrude with her finger on her lips and her glancing eyes looking timidly about her. Then, with her mouth close to Maurice's ear, she whispered, "I hear the baying of their beagle," and he answered in the same key, "'T is but the screaming of the eagle." Then a great effort was made to stir up an old dog who had been pressed into the service to enact the "Couchant Hound" that starts up and listens, but this generally failed, and Edgar and Mary with hats on and with sticks, personifying the murderous brothers, rushed upon Maurice, who always fought too long and would not let himself be killed, which, as Mary observed, was very unreasonable, as it was part of the play, and Gertrude screamed,

"O spare him Brazil, Desmond fierce!"

till she grew tired and hoarse, and fainted away before her lover was fairly killed.

The last act, however, was Gertrude's delight. She recited wonderfully well the spirited lines in which the daughter of O'Connor, in the madness of her passion and the delirium of her anguish, presents to her assassin brothers "the standard of O'Connor's sway," and pronounces a curse, which is to be fatally fulfilled

on that battle day, and which dooms their whole race to destruction. Her eyes flashed, her cheeks glowed, her slender childish form trembled as she cried —

> "Go then, away to Athunree,
> High lift the banner of your pride,
> But know that where its sheet unrolls,
> The weight of blood is on your souls.
> Go, where the havoc of your kerne
> Shall float as high as mountain fern;
> Men shall no more your mansion know,
> The nettles on your hearth shall grow,
> Dead as the green oblivious flood
> That mantles by your walls shall be
> The glory of O'Connor's blood.
> Away, away to Athunree."

Many a famous actress might have won applause for the look and tone of wild inspiration with which she swore

> "That sooner guilt the ordeal brand
> Should grasp unhurt than they should hold
> The banner with victorious hand,
> Beneath a sister's curse unrolled."

Such were the amusements of these children during about two years, and to Gertrude they were the happiest she had known. Then Edgar went to school, and soon after Maurice went to a school in London, and seldom came to Stonehouseleigh. Everything changed, — Gertrude and Mary were still friends, but there was no excitement to the former in their intercourse, and the latter took life very much in earnest, and had a great deal to do in her own home, and many cares and thoughts and occupations which

Lady-Bird did not understand, and in which she had no sympathy. And though they were fond of each other, there was no great intimacy between them: still, enough to become at any moment closer, as it did when a subject of common interest arose.

The link that connected them was an odd one; some may think it unnatural, but people are very different, and young girls, especially, have strange grounds of sympathy. Certain it is, that the circumstances which will be related in another chapter served to bring them together, and to give an interest to their intercourse which it had gradually been losing during the last few years. Perhaps it grew out of the fulness of one heart, and the emptiness of the other — something that required a vent in the one, a void to be filled in the other. This will be better understood as the story proceeds.

CHAPTER II.

"Sweet recreation barred what does ensue,
But restless, dull, and moody melancholy,
Sister to grim and comfortless despair,
And at her heels a huge infectious troop
Of pale distemperatures, and foes to life."

SHAKESPEARE.

On the prostrate stem of an old beech-tree towards the end of the month of May, about six years after Maurice had left Stonehouseleigh for London, Gertrude and Mary were sitting in a spot, which exhibits in all its varieties the peculiar beauties of English forest scenery. The first tinge of spring was colouring with its delicate green the thorns, the aspens, and the briars, which in innumerable natural avenues and picturesque intricacies formed a labyrinth, out of which sturdy oaks rose in grim majesty, their gnarled and twisted branches still exhibiting all the barrenness of winter, save where here or there the young moss or the misletoe clung to their rugged arms, and disguised their leaflessness. Daisies, cowslips, and primroses, the blue hyacinth and the frail anemone, were scattered about in abundance, here in rich clusters, there in brilliant carpets, everywhere in graceful beauty and confusion. It was exactly the moment when spring shows as great a variety of colours as autumn, when

it is as gorgeous in its greetings as the latter season in its adieus. As short-lived as it is beautiful, this hour of Nature's promise is no sooner arrived than it disappears, and deepens into the monotony of summer.

Often in their childhood these two girls had met to play where now they came to converse. Their bonnets were lying on the grass, and served as receptacles for the flowers which they gathered by handfuls without moving from their places. "So you are expecting Maurice to-day!" Gertrude exclaimed, after a pause in the conversation. She was answered by a smile and a faint blush of pleasure, not of embarrassment.

"How this spot puts me in mind of old times!" (at that age the lapse of a few years constitutes a remote antiquity) "of our games and our spoutings under this very tree, upon which we are now sitting. Is Maurice much altered since he last went away? Should I know him again?"

"He is a great deal taller, but his features are not changed, at least I think not, but as I have seen him every year in my winter visits to my aunt, perhaps I can hardly judge. His large dark eyes and pale complexion are just what they always were."

"And is he as fond of poetry as ever? Music has not made him neglect it?"

"O no! he thinks, like Shakespeare, that 'music and sweet poetry agree, as well they may — the sister

and the brother;' the more he studies the one, the more he delights in the other. When I was in London he brought something or other of that kind to read to me almost every evening. It was pleasant there to hear of fields and woods and streams. Only it would have made me long to come home again, if only he could have got away too."

"Then you know what it is to be so weary of a place as to hate the very sight of it?"

"No, not quite that either; I did not hate London, only I like the country much better."

"Whereas I would give anything to go to London. It is too bad really never to have seen it."

"You can hardly imagine how different it is from Stonehouseleigh, or even from Lancaster, Chester, or any of the towns in our neighbourhood."

"The more unlike it is to this part of the world, the better it would please me. The thickest of the London fogs, of which people talk so much, would be brighter to me than the finest day at Lifford Grange."

"It makes me sad to hear you speak in that way of your home."

"My home!" (O! "the world of dreary gloom that rose in the shadowy depths of those deep-set eyes," as the word was re-echoed with emphatic meaning.) "You who have had change in your life, Mary, and that before you cared or wished for it, can hardly understand the pining desire I feel for it. It is be-

coming quite a passion with me. The world must be such a beautiful, such an exciting thing!"

"Do you mean the world that God has made, or the one man makes according to Cowper's definition?"

"I mean the world as God has made it, as man has adorned it, as genius describes, and as imagination paints it. I mean London, not as you saw it, Mary, from a small house in an out-of-the-way street, and in its work-day dress of business and routine, but London with its luxury, its wealth, its court, its parliament, and what Charles Lamb — a greater poet perhaps than your favourite, Cowper — calls its poetry. And I mean Paris with all its brilliancy; Italy with its bright skies, its paintings, its music, its ruins, and its churches. I mean the Alps with their eternal snows. I mean the sea with its restless waves. I mean politics and literature and theatres and society, and everything that has change, and life, and spirit, and movement about it. That is what I read of, long for, pine for, and never shall enjoy."

"You look like a child, Lady-Bird, but you do not talk like one; no, nor like the very young girl that you are. How do you come to know and to wish for all these things? *I* have seen more of the world than you have, but they have scarcely entered into my thoughts."

"Books, Mary, books tell me a great deal, and give me strange feelings of pain and of pleasure. You

do not know how much I read — sometimes for hours together; and when I do not read, I dream. Do you know the pleasure of that?"

"Well, I rather like it at times; but as I sleep very soundly, it does not happen to me often."

Gertrude smiled and said: "I do not mean sleeping, but waking dreams, — sitting with folded hands, and eyes fixed on some object that amuses without engrossing the mind; and letting yourself drift, as it were at random, down the stream of your impressions, borne here and there by the current of your thoughts; motionless as if nothing was stirring in your soul, and weaving the while the thread of your own destiny into a web which a sound or a word can dissolve, as the wing of an insect breaks the light gossamer, or a breath melts the fanciful landscapes that frost prints on the windows. Have you never dreamed in *this* way, Mary?"

Mary answered with a faint blush and a smile, "Yes, but when my thoughts stray away, I endeavour to catch and bring them back again."

"Your's always run in the same direction, I suspect, so you always know where to find them."

Mary's head was turned away, and Gertrude continued — "The last book I have read is 'Corinne.' I found it in the library, hidden under a heap of pamphlets, and have *lived* in it for the last three days. It has redoubled my wish to see, to hear, to *live* in

short, for life is not life without interest and excitement, I am sure of that. You read French, Mary — do let me lend you 'Corinne;' it will show you what I mean so much better than I can express it."

"I had rather not, dear Lady-Bird; it may be right for you to read such books — it would not answer to me."

"I believe you never read any but religious books," Gertrude scornfully exclaimed.

"O, when Maurice is at home he reads all sorts of things out loud, while I work — novels, and plays, and poetry; but I have not much leisure for it at other times. Then, you know, our positions in life will be so different, that what may be good for you might be useless, or worse than useless to me."

"My position in life? What do you suppose it will be — to live and die an old maid at Lifford Grange, or retire to some nunnery, perhaps? Sometimes I have so longed for something new, that I have been almost thinking of that last alternative. I wish with all my heart they had sent me to a convent-school; I would have worked day and night to distinguish myself, and to gain prizes. A stimulant is everything, and emulation would have been a powerful one. Does not your heart beat, and your cheek flush when you read something very eloquent? — one of those passages that raise you half-way between earth and Heaven? You smile, Mary, and I know

what you would say. It is not through such ecstasies as these that we can rise to Heaven. But better rise in any way than grovel on the earth; give me the wings of a butterfly, if I cannot have those of an angel. *You* never get absorbed in anything but your prayers; you never pore over a book, or meditate on a poem; once only I have seen you read with your soul in your eyes; but it was the life of St. Francis Xavier, and in that —"

"Oh, in that there was enough to make a heart less cold and hard than mine burn within itself as it read, and even mine, dull as it is, could not but warm at such a flame."

"I thought I should elicit a spark of latent enthusiasm by that allusion. But, tell me, does not Maurice care about the things I was speaking of?"

A slight cloud passed over Mary's face, and she answered, "Only too much."

"Why *too much*, if they are not wrong?"

"I can hardly explain myself; but it seems to me difficult to care so much about beauty of every sort, and to be at the same time always contented with the state of life allotted to us."

"But Maurice is, or, at least, means to be an artist, and I have read, and I think I can understand that an artist lives on beauty of every kind, and that variety and excitement can alone keep alive the fire

that inspires him; that genius dies away in an atmosphere of monotony and dulness."

"But a quiet life is not necessarily a dull one," expostulated Mary. "I should have thought that genius, and art, and all those things you speak of, ought to make a man busy and happy in himself, and in his home, especially if —"

"If what, Mary?"

Mary bent down her head, and twisted together the blades of the long grass that grew at her feet, and then looking up into Gertrude's face, she said with simplicity:

"Especially if he loved, and was beloved."

"Love!" Gertrude repeated. "Love must be a very strange, a very strong thing. It may be the deepest of all joys, or the acutest of all miseries, but a quiet calm feeling I do not think it can be. I have read that it stirs up the heart and moves the inmost soul, as a storm does the sea, or a hurricane the forest."

"If so, we ought to fear it, but I do not believe that it is a right sort of love that you speak of. What is right should be calm."

"Can that be calm of which people die?"

"Do people die of love?"

"Don't you think they do?"

"I don't know, but would it not even then be possible to suffer and to die calmly?"

Calmly were her eyes raised to the soft blue sky over her head — but Gertrude's were fixed on a rapid stream that murmured along the bottom of the valley where they sat.

"Now that brook," she exclaimed, "I like it better than all the other beauties of Nature put together. It never remains in the same place, it hurries on, it is chafed with the stones that stop its onward course, and I like it for its anger; I love to see it foam and struggle, and long to help it on, and send it faster and faster where it is going —"

"And where is that?" Mary asked.

"Why, to the wide sea, I suppose."

"And then — when it gets there?"

"Then it is lost amongst the waves, and the eye sees it no more."

"O! does not that make you think of life and eternity, and would you not rather be like the silent stream that glides through green pastures and gives freshness to the fields and beauty to the flowers, than resemble that restless, useless, brawling rivulet that often swells into a torrent, and does mischief in its course?"

"Your thoughts, Mary, are all tuned to one key."

"Is not that the true secret of harmony?"

"A discord now and then has a good effect."

"You are too fond of them, dear Lady-Bird."

"Harmony can be very dull, and dullness harmoni-

ous. Since Edgar's departure nobody quarrels at Lifford Grange, and we are gradually dying of ennui. At least, I am. Everything goes on '*comme un papier de musique*,' and I have almost wished that the house would catch fire, or I the measles."

"Oh, that is so wrong, dear Lady-Bird. Do unsay it immediately."

"I did not say the small-pox. I should not like to be ugly."

"Is that all you care about? I cannot bear to hear you speak in that reckless manner."

"Why, to tell you the truth, I am not happy, and I like to joke better than to complain. Sir Thomas More joked on the scaffold."

"*He* might well smile at the idea of death, but you —"

"O, I have no wish to die, though I sometimes talk nonsense about it. I can be at times more serious than you would suppose."

Mary took Gertrude's hand, and kissed it affectionately. Both remained silent a few instants, and then the latter exclaimed,

"It is so trying to be thwarted and teazed about every trifle. You know how long I had wished to have a dog, and a short time ago the coachman gave me one — a little spaniel, one of the breed which they have at Woodlands. It was my constant companion, and the greatest amusement to me. I kept it out of

everybody's way. Jane took care of it when I was in the drawing-room, and it was so fond of me that I loved it foolishly in return. Well, last Monday it escaped from her, ran into the dining-room, and jumped on my knees. My father asked whose dog it was, and when he heard it was mine he ordered it to be sent away; I begged him very earnestly to let me keep it; he peremptorily refused. I told him that it was fond of me, and he sneered. The blood rushed to my face, and I said some passionate words. He rang the bell, and desired that a groom should instantly carry my dog back to Woodlands, and that if it made its way again here it should be shot. O! Mary, I am very foolish; but I can hardly speak without a choking sensation in my throat, and my cheek burns like a hot coal. God forgive me for what I said, or rather felt at the time. I thought of Pélisson and his spider."

"Was Father Lifford there — what did he say?"

"He never looked up from the newspaper, but I think he frowned and bit his lip when my father spoke of their shooting the little animal."

"He has not been shot?" Mary anxiously asked.

"No — he was given to a lady who was just leaving Woodlands, and she took him away with her. I went to my room and cried for some hours, more with anger than with sorrow. In some ways my father treats me like a child, and in others as a ser-

vant or a slave, and I am too like him to endure it patiently."

"But you have a great deal of personal liberty; is not that some compensation?"

"Liberty to wander alone about an extensive prison, that is all; and even that is the result of neglect — not of kindness."

"Dearest Lady, are not your mother and Father Lifford kind to you?"

"Mamma, you know, is always ill — always suffering. She can seldom bear the sound of a voice above a whisper. She tells me not to shut myself up in her sick room: she has hardly strength enough to talk to me. I sometimes wish to be more attentive to her, but I do not know how to set about it. As to Father Lifford, I don't think he likes me much; Edgar is his favourite, because he is such a good boy. He is always finding fault with me, and I like his scoldings better than papa's silence. In confession he is sometimes very kind, but that is quite another thing, you know. He would be kind, perhaps, at other times also if I behaved differently, and did not read books that he disapproves, or *would* learn Spanish, or *not* laugh at the divine rights of kings, or think Napoleon a great man, or not talk of things *he* says I do not understand, but which I am sure I know more about than he does."

"O Lady-Bird, how can you think so? He must

be much wiser than you, at his age — and a priest too."

"I am not talking of theology, or morality, or history, or geography, but of other things which I have read, thought, and made up my mind about, and which he will not even discuss, or allow that they admit of argument. I *dare* not speak of them before papa. There is something *under* his silence that frightens me. But I am not afraid of provoking Father Lifford, because I know the worst he will say."

"That is not generous."

"O yes, it is, because he says all sorts of severe things to me, and can order me to be silent if he chooses. Then I console myself with thinking that I had the best of the argument."

"Come, come, Lady-Bird, I will not listen to any more of your iniquities. The sun is just about to set and we must be going home."

"Another day over! another sun setting! another to-morrow coming!" Gertrude murmured to herself, as with her bonnet in her hand and her back against the stem of a tree, she fixed her eyes on the gold and crimson clouds that were blazing in the west. "How beautiful they are, those sunset clouds! How like another world, and a brighter one than this. I sometimes think that the land of my birth may have some of the dazzling beauty which shines in that western

sky. I am haunted by a vague recollection of that country where I was born and where I spent the first years of my life. Perhaps the air of the south breathed into my veins a fire which will not let me rest contented as you all do, in this dull corner of the wide world. Come, let us go home."

"Let us go home!" Words that in some cases are as sweet music to the ear, and the deepest joy of the heart. To others, a sound full of sad meaning, a thought that weighs heavily on the soul, and clouds the brow with the remembrance of suffering, and the anticipations of trial. Home! Home! Beautiful English word; shelter, refuge — happiness, or consolation. Would that you were always the heaven you sometimes are; binding up the bruised heart, or gladdening the young spirit! — not the sanctuary of tyranny, and the mockery of domestic bliss.

"I must go home," Gertrude Lifford said; and Mary Grey repeated, "Yes, we must go home." But a different tone was in the voices, and a different picture in the minds of each of these young girls.

"I know" (the one began as they walked along the alley of hazel wood that led to the common) "I know you think it strange that I am not more attentive, as it is called, to my mother, but what can one do when people do not like attentions, if they ask one not to put one's self out of the way on their account?"

"Perhaps, show them that it is love, and not a mere sense of duty that prompts one. Few people like attentions which do not seem the result of affection."

"Love and affection are strange words to me. I thought that duty, not feeling, was to be the rule of our actions. I should be much worse than I am, if once I began to act from impulse. There rises up at times in me a spirit of defiance which takes possession of my whole being, and steels my heart against all gentle feelings. I rebel against the common-place things that people say about loving others, as if love was to be called up and laid aside at pleasure! It is possible to be a slave, and it may be a duty to remain one, (that is, by the way, one of the points about which I argue with Father Lifford); but to make one's self love people, simply because it is right to do so, is an impossibility, an absurdity. You look vexed, Mary, do not suppose that I do not love mamma. Heaven forbid — poor patient suffering mamma. I do love her, and if I did not I should not say so, for I hate every description of lying, and canting lies worse than any others. But I wish you to understand that your way of considering the subject would be no security against evil in a nature like mine."

"But when I speak of *love* I do not mean a mere human feeling, though even that" (Mary's voice faltered a little as she said this) "might teach us something

of the nature of true devotion; but I mean that principle of charity which has all the force of duty, the vivacity of impulse, and the tenderness of affection."

"Was it charity that used to make you so attentive to Maurice?"

A deep flush suffused the pale little girl's face, but she answered steadily:

"He was always delicate; it came naturally to me to care for him and to watch him, and it was too great a happiness to be like a duty."

"He was very captivating, certainly, and clever, also, as far as I recollect, but then we are like Miranda in her island, we have no opportunities for making comparisons. Do not be angry. I am sure he was charming. Mamma used to call him 'El Chico,' and Father Lifford liked him too. How old is he now?"

"About twenty-one."

"Of age, then?"

"O yes, we sent him a large nosegay by the coach, or his birthday would have past unnoticed."

"He is organist at one of the London chapels, is not he?"

"Yes, and he practises and composes a great deal, and reads also many books, and writes verses. I think it is a good thing for him to have those tastes — it keeps him out of mischief."

"I see that your fears for those you love are greater than your ambition, Mary. Do you value

his genius only because it may keep him out of mischief?"

"It is my way of saying more than I well know how to say, dear Lady-Bird. But it is not little I mean."

"I believe you often *do* mean much more than you say, you little quiet mouse, and that if one went deep enough into your thoughts, one would find in them —"

"O nothing, I assure you, that would reward the trouble of diving. But, tell me, who was it who rode just now across the lane to the common?"

"Mr. Mark Apley, the son of Mr. Apley of Woodlands. Had you never seen him before? He rides so well, and has such beautiful horses! I have often met him when I have been walking with Jane. One day that I was gathering some honeysuckles, and was trying to reach a branch that was too high for me, he caught it with his stick, and held it close to my hand."

"Did you thank him?"

"Only by a low curtsey, and I have not bowed to him since. But it would be very amusing to know a few people. Even such a little thing as that gives one something to think about."

If Gertrude had at that moment dived into the thoughts of the little mouse by her side, she would have seen her innocent astonishment that her dear Lady-Bird, whose mind was as active as her spirit was rest-

less, whose love of reading was a passion, whose conversation — young as she was — was full of originality, should want "something to think about," but she was not right to be astonished. A tendency to ennui, joined to a craving for excitement even of the most trivial description, is the disease of certain minds, and there is but one cure for it. Call it what you will; self-education, not for this world but for the next; the work of life understood; perfection conceived and resolutely aimed at; the dream of human happiness resigned, and in the same hour its substance regained; the capital paid into the next world, and the daily unlooked-for interest received in this; — such is the strange alchymy in which God deals, and the secret of so many destinies which the world wonders over, and never learns to understand.

"Oh, how beautiful the view is at this moment!" Mary exclaimed, as they came in sight of the common, which shone like burnished gold in the rays of the setting sun, while the peculiar perfume of the gorse in full flower was wafted to them by the evening breeze. Clumps of dark fir-trees rose out of that sea of yellow blossoms, and views of distant country and masses of forest trees were visible in the distance.

"You have wings to your feet," Gertrude cried out as her companion preceded her, while she stopped to gather the feathery balls of a full-blown dandelion.

"What are you about, Lady-Bird? — what a strange nosegay you are making!"

She was breathing upon the downy globe, and the light stamens were flying away in every direction.

"I am telling myself my own fortune. Wait a minute, — I see them still."

"What do you see?"

"My airy messengers."

"Oh, baby of sixteen, to play at such nonsense!"

"Have you never read about the Indian women on the banks of the Ganges?"

"What, the widows who burn themselves?"

"No, the babies of sixteen who kneel by the broad river, and send their leafy lamps floating down the stream; and if the light they carry is still burning when it vanishes from their sight, then they think that their heart's desire will be accomplished. Cannot you fancy how they must bend over the brink of those deep waters, with their hearts beating, and their eyes straining after the little fiery bark that follows the current? — how they must tremble when it gets entangled in the leaves of the lotus; how they must shout for joy when it turns with the bend of the river?"

"It is a fanciful notion and a pretty one, I own; but what made you think of it just now?"

"I have my superstition, too; but I am a votary of the air — not of the water. I send my messengers aloft. They carry my thoughts with them on the

s of the wind; they tell my secrets to the clouds
ny hopes to the breeze. There, fly where I send
" and another downy ball was launched into the
and the wind bore away the light atoms. Once
dden gust blew them back into her face; she
ied them away and said, "That means disap-
ment." A slight cloud gathered on her brow,
she walked on in silence to the gate of her own
, the old Manor House of Lifford Grange. There
parted with Mary, and sauntered up the avenue.

CHAPTER III.

"O absence! what a torment would'st thou prove,
Wer 't not that thy sour leisure gives sweet leave
To entertain the time with thoughts of love."

SHAKESPEARE.

MARY hurried home with a quicker step than usual, and hastily mounting the narrow stairs of the cottage, she looked into the room where Maurice was to sleep that night. She smelt the violets which she had put there an hour before, and fancied they had lost something of their sweetness. The books he had left in her care were neatly arranged on the shelves. A little picture of St. Maurice, and a black profile of herself — a birthday present of a few years back — hung on each side of the chimney. She wiped some grains of dust off the deal table where he used to write when a boy, and in her heart there was a joy that made it flutter a little, and in her eyes a shade of unwonted excitement.

For a few minutes she stood at the open window, gazing on the London road as far as her eye could reach. Then it rested on the one tree of their garden, the old thorn "just flushing into green," on the narrow gravel walk and the gate beyond it, on each familiar object and then on the sky above them, so familiar also with its fleecy clouds and sunset colour-

ing, and yet so full of novelty, in its ever-varying combinations of beauty. Now the bright hues were fading away, and the twilight hour was arrived, that charm of northern climes, that lingering adieu of the parting day, which is so sad or soothing, according to the temper of our minds.

Every noise gradually hushed into silence, the faint rustle of the leaves as the night-wind stirs them, the low twitter of the birds amongst the branches that conceal them, the occasional distant bark of a dog, the fall of a footstep, or the rumbling of a carriage far away on the high road, all is in harmony — all is subdued, as in the quiet landscapes of Paul Potter, or in the poetry of Cowper. The mind that appreciates the beauty of an English twilight hour must be at once calm and imaginative. It is neither vivid enough to excite nor powerful enough to captivate, where the mental faculties are stagnant, or the action of the soul precipitate. It came home to Mary's feelings with peculiar force, and had she ever dreamed life's moments away, she would have done so then; but she had quite a morbid horror of idleness, and turned away from the indulgence of a few minutes reverie, as others less scrupulous might have done from a sin. When she went down to the sitting-room her mother was at the tea-table.

"I have been thinking and thinking, Mary dear, what we had better do about a fire. He might like one after his journey, though certainly it is not cold to-day."

"O yes, mother! one of your French wood-fires.

We will light it with the cones that we picked up in the Chase. We can make it burn directly."

In a moment she was on her knees before the grate, and a bright flame threw a glow on her cheeks which the night air had bleached. Then she turned round while still on her knees to her mother, who took her head between her hands and looked fondly into her eyes.

"O, mother, how foolish it is of people to surprise their friends. It takes away so many happy hours of expectation." Then starting up, she exclaimed, "There are the wheels! O, listen, it is the coach!"

There was a moment's silence, the sound grew more distinct, and then the coach itself stopped at the gate, the maid opened the door, and Mary rushed into the passage, and held in her breath, not to lose the first sound of a step — the first accent of a voice that had been music to her ears ever since she could remember.

"It is a letter, Miss Mary, not Mr. Maurice."

Numerous were the thoughts that had time to shoot across her mind during the seconds that intervened between the utterance of these words by the maid, and her return to the fire-side. There was room for the recollection of Gertrude's exclaiming, "That means disappointment!" — her heart inwardly re-echoed the ejaculation, but added, as if to re-assure itself, "He must be coming to-morrow." Sitting down at her mother's side, she opened the letter, and made

a sign to her to read at the same time as herself, but she had got to the end before Mrs. Redmond had found her spectacles. "Take it, mother," she said in a faint voice, "I think we ought to be very glad;" and she went to the window and leant her forehead against the glass and squeezed her hands together, trying very hard to feel glad.

When her mother had finished reading and called to her to say so, the struggle was over, and in answer to the anxious look with which Mrs. Redmond was awaiting her comments, ready to grieve or to rejoice as she led the way, she was able to say: "It is all right, dearest mother. We must rejoice at his good fortune, we must prefer it to the selfish pleasure of seeing him here; but perhaps I understand now why people *should* come as a surprise." She tried to smile, but the attempt was a failure; one little sob escaped her, but after that she went about her business as if nothing was the matter. On her way to her own room, she walked softly into the one she had that morning prepared with such care, and carried back the books and pictures to her own: there she read again the letter which she had so rapidly perused at first. It was as follows: —

"My dearest Mary, I had hoped as you know to have been with you to-night, to have been sitting this evening between you and dear mother, to have heard your loved voices, and looked on your dear faces, and

can hardly believe that it is not to be so, that these summer months which we had so reckoned on spending together will see us further apart than we have ever yet been, and that by my own doing. But when I tell you what has occurred, I am sure you will think I was right in taking advantage of an offer at once so unexpected and so advantageous to my future career, and to the destiny which you are to share with me.

"You know, my Mary, that you have made up your mind long ago to be an artist's true wife, and to allow me to love my art with a passion which you have promised never to be jealous of. If some post of profit alone had been offered to me, some means of making money which would have separated me from you for some years, I should have either rejected it, or at least not accepted it without consulting you; but in the present instance what is proposed to me is an extraordinary opportunity for the cultivation of talents which may one day make me eminent, for the developement of a gift which, if it exists, I must answer for to the Giver, nor let it lie dormant in the mere exercise of an almost mechanical employment.

"I believe I possess it, that precious gift of genius, because my sufferings and my enjoyments are of a peculiar nature, and ally themselves with a high wrought enthusiasm or an unaccountable depression, which are both unknown to those in whom that electric spark has never vibrated.

"Once it seemed to me, dearest Mary, that to go to Italy, to that land of art, of music, and of inspiration, was a dream that never could be realised. I have heard others talk of what Nature is in those southern climes, of the harmony it breathes into the soul, of the influence of its skies on the imagination, of its very air on the spirits, and I have longed with a vain and ardent longing to carry there my dreamy conceptions, my imperfect but as I fondly hope not worthless imaginings. Now all is offered to me: sunshine and leisure, variety and stimulus, emotions to experience and liberty to enjoy them. In accepting it I feel that you will accompany me in spirit to the bright scenes I am about to visit, that the image of your sweet face and the sound of your gentle voice, which has cheered me so often amidst the drudgery of many years, will accompany me henceforward amidst all the wonders of Nature and art.

"As usual, I have allowed my thoughts and my pen to run away with me, and have not yet told you the simple state of the case. It is this — a few weeks ago young Dee, the painter in whose studio I was lingering in admiration of a fine painting that he was copying, introduced me to its possessor, who happened to enter the room at that moment. His name is M. d'Arberg. He is half French and half German by birth, though his mother was English. He speaks exactly like an Englishman. He seemed pleased with

my enthusiasm about his picture, entered into conversation with me, and I often met him afterwards at Dee's. He is one of the most peculiar persons you can conceive, and at the same time you cannot point out any peculiarities in him. He is handsomer than any one I have ever seen, and yet if you ask me what is most remarkable in his appearance, I should say it was the look of repose, and that the most striking charm of his manner is that he has no manner at all. I never saw such perfect simplicity. He does all sorts of kind and extraordinary things as if they were the commonest in the world, and in such an unpretending manner, that you forget to think them strange, till you think over them afterwards.

"He was speaking yesterday to Dee about me, and what they were both pleased to call my genius; and Dee happened to say how ardently I longed to go to Italy, and what an advantage it would be to me, but that I was too poor to afford it. He pulled his memorandum book out of his pocket, made a few calculations with a pencil, and then told him that he was going to Rome for two years, and that if I could arrange to set off with him at once, he would take me there to assist him in some literary pursuits he was engaged in, and at the same time, that he would allow me leisure and afford me opportunities for prosecuting my musical studies. Dee said he spoke of it as simply as if he had been proposing to take me for the day to

Richmond or Brighton. You can easily imagine my agitation when the offer was made and what a mixture of pain and pleasure was involved in it. I felt I could not hesitate, and yet to go without seeing you, without hearing from you! but I knew what you would say, what you and dearest mother would feel, and I accepted — and rapidly achieved the necessary preparations.

"They were very kind to me at the Chapel about resigning my post so suddenly. I feel shy at the idea of such long *tête-à-tête* hours with M. d'Arberg. I hope he will not weary of my society. I have so little to say for myself, except to those with whom I think aloud, like you and Dee. This evening, when you will be expecting me at the green gate, I shall be on my way to Italy. O, Mary, that thought makes me wretched! I hope you will not think me unkind? You would not think me indifferent if you were to see the kisses I imprint on this paper, and the tears that fall upon it. I shall always wear round my neck what you gave me when we last parted. Give mother one of your gentle kisses for me. O that I could clasp you both to my heart!

"Does Lady-Bird ever embrace you now? She was not proud when we used to act together. But now, if we were to meet, I should have to call her Miss Lifford, and to kiss even her hand would be too much boldness. Will you tell Father Lifford how much I regret not to have had his blessing before my

departure. Write to me often — pray for me, think of me, love me, and believe me, your ever affectionate and devoted "MAURICE."

Was it very unreasonable of Mary not to feel satisfied with this letter? — to have wished that there had not been so many fine words in it? — to be as jealous of Italy as if it were an enemy? — to go to sleep with an aching at her heart deeper than the pain of separation, and which re-produced itself in a variety of dreams, all relating to Maurice? She was always going to him, and getting near him without being able to overtake him, or to make him listen to her. Sometimes the form of a woman, whose features she could not discern, was hovering round him and keeping her at a distance. When she disappeared another took her place and sang a beautiful song, in which Maurice joined while she could not, and the spot where she was standing — and where she felt herself rooted — was growing darker and darker, while he and the bright vision were disappearing along a road of light such as the sunbeams form on the flashing foam of the billows. She made a great effort to follow them, and awoke with her pillow wet with tears, and his letter in her hand. He the while was crossing the sea with a fair wind and a careless heart, over which thoughts of tenderness and of regret careered swiftly and lightly as the fleecy clouds which scud before the breeze, and throw no shade on the glad waves of the ocean.

"Come now, Mary, tell me the truth — Maurice is your lover — I am sure of it."

"He loves me very much, and I love him dearly."

"But I mean that you are engaged to marry him."

"O, no!"

"No! but in this letter he says as much?"

"We are both perfectly free."

"He does not seem to have any doubt of your affection."

"No. He never could doubt of that."

"I am not talking of sisterly affection. What I mean is that he reckons on your sharing his fate, whatever it may be."

"We have always been accustomed to talk and to think in that way. But it does not mean all you suppose. We have never made any promises."

The interest that Gertrude had shown in Mary's disappointment, the numerous questions she had asked on the subject, her evident desire to see the letter he had written, and which Mary readily enough had yielded to, had occasioned the foregoing conversation. Perhaps she was not sorry to see what impression it would make on one not keenly interested like herself in its contents. Gertrude's curiosity was roused by the little romance it disclosed, and Maurice's way of writing, his account of M. D'Arberg, his longings after change and novelty, with which she could so entirely

sympathise, formed a glimpse into the world which captivated her fancy. She entered into the subject with a zest and an intelligence which became irresistibly agreeable to Mary. However well regulated the mind may be — however disciplined the feelings — it is scarcely possible that a girl of her age should keep locked up in her own breast the one thought that fills her existence; and the more matter-of-fact are her habits of life and of mind, the less acquaintance she has with novels and poems and the romantic experience of others, the more perhaps is felt the need of such sympathy. Not that Mary abandoned her accustomed reserve, and made what is called a confidante of Gertrude. On the contrary, she never admitted that she was engaged to Maurice, or that she considered any of his affectionate expressions as assurances that he loved her more than he had always done since earliest childhood, or than she would and might love him to her dying day, even should they never be more to each other than in the past or the present time. It was an odd instinct that made her at once so reserved and so communicative. She had her secret, with which no one was to intermeddle; but to talk of him to somebody besides her mother (who was a sort of second self) was an unspeakable satisfaction.

And Gertrude had also a singular power of extorting more than winning confidence. She questioned with a sagacity — investigated a subject with a per

severance which it was almost impossible to evade. She was unconsciously artful with all her playful brusquerie, and always on the watch where her interest was excited. Maurice's allusion to herself and the sort of homage it implied had amused her imagination. It reminded her of their former intimacy, and she did not dislike the thought that he preserved a sort of respectful remembrance of it, tinged with a shade of romance, that did not in the least interfere with what appeared to be his attachment to the companion of his childhood. It became an established thing that she should read his letters — and to become acquainted with a person in that manner had a peculiarity in it which amused her fancy. Her comments upon them furnished Mary with more *piquant* materials for her answers than she would otherwise have found. But, always scrupulous, she carefully prefaced such remarks with "Lady-Bird thinks" or "Lady-Bird says." It seemed to her as if thus she could keep more on a level with his present state of mind, and as if the intelligent comments on his descriptions of Italy and of society — which Gertrude dictated — kept up between them a more animated intercourse than she could otherwise have sustained, and it was strange how these two girls during that time lived in thought amidst the scenes, the persons, and the objects which the young artist described; but it was in a totally different way. His presence

amongst them — his image ever present before her mental sight was what gave *them* interest in Mary's eyes; whereas in Gertrude's it was his connexion with a world which she pined to be acquainted with which gave *him* importance.

He wrote well; he lived with artists and literary men. He spoke of Italy with an enthusiasm that kindled hers. The very names of the places which he mentioned were music to her ears: it was like the sound of the trumpet to the war-horse, or the cry of the hounds to the hunter, for the self-taught but deeply read and excitable girl, to hear of poetry in real life, of history in visible monuments, of religion in its grandest and most majestic symbols. The wild Italian dreams of liberty and independence which were stirring many hearts at that period were reflected in his eloquent words, and added another element to the fervour of his effusions. He had become intimate with artists of all sorts, and several eminent persons had shown him great kindness. His efforts, his studies, his occasional successes, his hopes and his fears, his friendships, his gratitude, his hatreds, his sympathies were all uncertain, ardent, wayward and fanciful, as also were the compositions which from time to time he put forth, and which were applauded by some and criticised by others.

There was genius in everything he composed, but not enough unity of purpose, or concentration of mind

for excellence; but he was perhaps too young yet to excel, and his good looks, his intelligence, his admiration for Italy, and passion for his art won him favour with all his associates.

Mary always showed Gertrude his letters; whether they contained expressions of affection for herself, or projects for the future, or allusions to his childish recollections of her whom he always called "Lady-Bird." But, as was said before, into the secrets of her own heart she did not admit her. With all her ingenuity and penetration, Gertrude could not satisfy herself as to the precise nature of Mary's feelings for Maurice, or as to the seriousness of his attachment to her, and this doubt was a perpetual stimulus to her curiosity. The passages about herself in his letters pleased her imagination, and she felt slightly disappointed if in two or three successively there was no allusion of the sort.

Once he wrote from Florence: "I was sitting this morning on one of the benches of the Cascino, enjoying the fresh air after a night of intense study, listening to the murmurs of the Arno, and the distant sounds of the gay city. A flower-girl passed me, and threw into my lap a hyacinth and a sprig of jessamine. She laughed and told me they would help me to dream of my absent mistress. The gift and the smile were both charming, and, strange to say, both flowers were associated in my mind with recollections

of home and of the past: — you, my Mary, with the pure white little flower that you were always so fond of, and our Lady-Bird with the sweet perfume and glorious colour of the hyacinth. It was the sceptre she always chose when she acted Titania. The Italian girl had indeed thrown a spell over my dreams, and I remained long in that spot, treading again in fancy the alleys of the Chase, and living over in imagination the happy days of our childhood."

After a long interval he wrote thus from Rome:

"Have you ever been pursued by a consciousness that certain objects, certain faces, certain appearances, have a relation to your fate, a deeper meaning, a different sense for you than for the rest of the world — an influence over you which you feel without being able to analyse it? Some eyes have had that effect upon me. Whenever I have seen the peculiar expression I mean, it has always caused me an unaccountable emotion; and I have an intimate conviction that such eyes as those must have, at some time or other of my life, some strange connexion with my destiny — whether for good or for evil I know not. It is not often that I have met with the eyes I mean, and when I have done so, it has been in faces as different as possible in every other respect; in the old and in the young, in men and in women. Other eyes look *at* you, these look *into* you. I can only compare the glance I mean to a ray of light shining through the

darkest leaf of a purple heartsease. Before I left England I never met with it but in one person. Look well at Lady-Bird the next time you see her, and then tell me if you perceive what I mean. Since I have been abroad I have observed it once in an old monk who was praying in one of the side chapels of the Cathedral of Padua, another time in an actress I saw performing the part of Francesca di Rimini at Naples, and once again very lately in one of the handsome boys who were begging on the steps of the Pincio. Was there a likeness in the souls that spoke through these eyes — else why that strange resemblance, when all else was dissimilar? I have mused upon this for hours, and almost lost myself in thought. But what I cannot lose is the habit of talking aloud to you, dear Mary; though I can fancy that *your* eyes, which have never looked anything but peace into my soul, are now gently smiling at my fanciful folly."

Again, some months later, he wrote thus from Naples:

"Countries, like names, like flowers, like sounds, have a likeness to particular people, independently, I think, of all association. That the calm beauty of an English landscape should always put me in mind of you is not extraordinary — for we have lived and grown up together amidst its quiet scenery; but why does this country so often bring to my recollection the image of Lady-Bird, as I remember her in our days of forest games and fireside stories? The other day at

Sorrento one of my Italian friends was repeating to me, as we sat by the sea-shore, almost intoxicated by the perfume of the orange-blossoms, Filicaja's well-known address to Italy. When he pronounced the words, 'Fatal gift of beauty,' I instantly saw before me *her* face, with that eager, wistful, and sorrowfully-indignant expression it always had when listening to some tale of pity or of crime. O God forbid that to her the gift of beauty should be fatal! Let her resemble Italy in its charm, but never in its woe!"

At another time he reminded them of some rude verses he had addressed as a boy to Gertrude, and which ran thus: —

"Come, Lady-Bird; come, rest you here; O do not fly away.
See, we have made a throne for you; come, fold your wings and stay.
We do not love the dragon-fly that darts about the lea,
We care not for gay butterflies, all gorgeous though they be;
We do not love the birds that soar so freely up on high,
We do not care for those that sing their matins in the sky;
We do not love the red rose wild, all bright with early dew,
But we love you, the 'Lady-Bird,' and weave a crown for you.
We read of humming-birds whose wings like living jewels glow,
We ween the Lady-Bird has eyes that still more brightly show;
We see the fire-flies shine at night, in countries far away,
We care not for their light if she will fold her wings and stay."

And he said that he had translated, or rather imitated it in French, and set it to music; that it had had great success, and was sung at all the concerts during that winter. "C'est la fille des cieux, c'est l'oiseau du bon Dieu" was the favourite romance of the season. Once he had heard a peasant girl on the

shore at Amalfi warble a few notes in a voice that reminded him of hers, or in a picture gallery he had seen a face that was like her, or some famous actress had, by a look or a gesture, made him think of "O'Connor's child" in the green bowers of Oakland Chase.

In the course of the time that he remained in Italy Mary was once very ill, and Mrs. Redmond, who was wholly employed in nursing her, asked Gertrude to write to him and explain the reason of their silence. The task was not unpleasing, and she called him "dear Maurice," as she had done when they were children. And when Mary was recovering, she wrote under her dictation, and mingled playful comments of her own with the more grave communications she was charged to make, and in this way a sort of correspondence was established which amused them all. Nobody knew of it at the Grange, and no one thought it odd at the cottage. Time went on, and no events marked its course. In gloom and in sunshine, through the winter and the summer, it sped its onward way, unmarked by any vicissitudes, unenlivened by any change, except those modifications which it wrought in the character of one who was passing from girlhood into womanhood in constant struggles with herself, in warfare with her own thoughts and feelings, but with hardly any contact with the world without.

CHAPTER IV.

"Now bank and brae are clothed in green,
An' scattered cowslips sweetly spring,
An' birdies flit on wanton wing.
There wi' my Mary let me flee,
There catch her ilka glance o' love,
The bonny blink o' Mary's ee!"

BURNS.

"With goddess-like demeanour forth she went,
Not unattended, for on her as queen
A pomp of winning graces waited still;
And from about her shot darts of desire
Into all eyes, to wish her still in sight."

SPENSER.

THREE years had elapsed since the time when thi story began, and Maurice Redmond had returned fron Italy with stronger health, keen aspirations after suc cess and distinction, a mind stored with images o beauty and dreams of harmony, and to all appearanc a heart unchanged in its warm affection for the mothe and the companion of his childhood. On a sultr evening in August, not many days after his arrival he sauntered with Mary Grey towards an old ston bridge over the Leigh, about a mile from the village The river at that spot was bright and clear; the alders with their dark foliage, were reflected in its waters a in a mirror; water-cresses and forget-me-nots floate near its shores; the stately mullein grew on its banks

the king-fisher dipped his beak in the stream, and the dragon-fly darted to and fro on its surface. On the mossy stones of the bridge they sat down together — Maurice with his foreign-looking straw hat in his hand, a ribbon tied loosely round his neck instead of a cravat, and his dark eyes looking as if they were almost too large for his pale and thin face; and Mary with her neat brown dress, her white shawl carefully pinned, her bonnet tied under her chin with the most English precision, and projecting over a face that happiness was making almost beautiful.

So *he* seemed to think; for he untied the strings and pushed back that close bonnet, and gazed upon her with a smile that brought a blush into her cheek, which, though no longer sallow as in her childhood, had scarcely more colour than a white cornelian. That gentle Mary Grey had a most loving nature, but a timid one also, that is, in all that concerned her affections, for otherwise there was in her a store

> "Of hardy virtues, which like spirits start
> From some unknown abyss within the heart."

But she had no confidence in her own powers of pleasing; her qualities were of the sort that every one else could appreciate better than their possessor. Maurice's affection, or rather her own love for him, was part and parcel of her being. He had returned from Italy essentially improved in health, and far

handsomer — at least in her eyes — than she had expected. His was certainly not the ideal of manly beauty, but there was something ideal in it. His complexion was transparent; there was a pensive expression in his face when he was grave, and a joyousness when he was pleased, that were very attractive. His forehead was like marble, except when a sudden flush suffused his temples. His figure was slight, his voice low and gentle; but now and then a sudden transport of anger or of emotion would convulse the almost feminine beauty of his features. It was like a storm on the Mediterranean, — rising in an instant and subsiding again with inconceivable rapidity.

Mary's presence was singularly soothing to this nervous irritability, which might be the effect of his passion for music, or more probably its cause. In her society he felt a repose, a "bien-être," which he hailed with rapture, and expressed — as he did whatever he felt — with enthusiasm. It came as a surprise to her, this apparently unchanged affection of his, for during the years of his absence she had taught herself not to expect it, had never thought of the possibility of loving him less, but always of the probability that he might be changed, and had schooled herself into the belief that if it were so she would have nothing to complain of, although much to suffer. When first she saw him again, her heart involuntarily sank within her; he was too handsome — as she

thought — too clever, and too happy for her to influence his destiny, or to have any hold on his affections. She mentally exclaimed

> "I am not fair like thee,
> The very glance of whose clear eye
> Throws round a light of glee."

But when she discerned the germs of suffering in his highly wrought imagination, in his febrile organisation, and perceived that he was often tormented by anxiety and nervous depression of spirits, then she saw in his life her place, in his destiny her part, and putting her hand to the plough, counted the cost that day, and never looked back.

The evening hour! How soothing it was to both! How full of sweet memories, and pleasant thoughts of the future! Maurice had been at home for some days, but they had not yet taken a walk alone together — Mary, the most industrious of bees, had not much time for strolling; she had considered it her first duty on his return to look over his wardrobe as she used to do, and mend whatever was amiss in it. He tried to laugh or tease her out of her housewifely ways, but without success — she was much too notable a little person to be influenced by his reckless remarks on the subject, and often assured him that, though he was a great deal more famous, he was not much richer than when he went away, and that he should always remember that one stitch in time saves nine, with va-

rious other proverbial aphorisms and apposite sayings besides; so he was obliged to content himself with walking about the miniature garden, gathering now one flower, now another, while she sat under the thorn-tree, working and singing, and now and then giving utterance to certain little indignant comments on the iniquities of foreign laundresses and sempstresses.

But Sunday was come, and after vespers they walked (an old habit of theirs) to the bridge over the Leigh. She gathered a wall-flower that grew in the crevices of the arch, and fastened it in his hat. He smiled and said: "How sweet it smells! An Italian lady would faint with its perfume. What compensation for us in our chilly climes, though not flowerless fields, as Cowper unjustly calls them, that we need not be afraid of the breath of these

> 'Sweet nurslings of the vernal skies,
> Bathed in soft airs and fed with dew.'

And what a blessing it is that home is all it is to us in spite of drawbacks in it, and of attractions elsewhere; that those rude voices that were singing just now the litany we were so fond of as children, have a charm for me which the most sublime strains of the Sistine Chapel cannot match; that these alders speak more to my heart than the chesnut groves of Subiaco or the pines of Vallombrosa; and that my English

Mary has more beauty in my eyes than the proudest Roman lady, or the prettiest girl of Albano. But you must see those sunny climes, my Mary; you must stand with me one day, and look from the deserted gardens of the Villa Mattei at the dream-like Campagna — you must kneel with me in St. Peter's, and feel the Miserere wringing your soul with unearthly melody — you must receive on that gentle little head of yours the wonderful blessing which on the day of the Resurrection falls on Rome and on the world. Oh, you must come with me to that land of poetry and of religion, and learn to love it with the twofold love of the Christian and of the artist."

"Maurice, I have never, even as a child, heard the name of Rome without emotion, and to go there with you, to visit the tombs of the Apostles and the relics of martyrs, to receive the blessing you speak of by your side, kneeling in some corner of that great prostrate city, to see what you admire, to feel what you have felt, would be indeed a dream of happiness; but would it not be like digging up this daisy here, and planting it in the middle of the camellias and the cactuses of the Woodlands conservatory, to take *me* amongst the people and to the places where you have been lately living?"

"I know *one* person who would appreciate you, Mary. Guess who?"

"Somebody who would like me, Maurice? Not Emilia Orlandini?"

"O you spiteful little girl. I did not think you had as much malice in your composition — so to take advantage of my confessions. I hope you did not show *that* letter to Lady-Bird?"

"No, I contrived not to do so, but it was difficult. It is always difficult not to do what *she* wishes."

"So I remember of old — how she used to govern us by her smiles and her tears; but I, at least, am made of sterner stuff now-a-days."

"Do not boast," said Mary, gaily.

"But to return to what I was saying," he continued, "it is M. d'Arberg who would like you."

"Indeed! I thought he was such a superior person — so clever and literary and all that sort of thing."

"Yes, he is that, but what he is most particularly is a man of one purpose, and he likes simplicity and earnestness better than anything else in life. I cannot explain it exactly, but there is a likeness between you: I suppose you are both very religious. But I have seen other people who were so too, but not just in the same way."

"Maurice, I liked so much what you said just now about loving Rome. 'As a *Christian* and an artist.'"

He coloured deeply, and with his eyes turned away

from Mary's and fixed on a leaf which was floating down the stream he hurriedly exclaimed:

"You must not think me better than I am, Mary, my faith has, thank God, never wavered; I admire goodness and truth and piety as much as ever, and my soul — with all its powers of reason, intelligence and imagination — worships in our divine religion the union of whatever is beautiful to the eye and exalting to the mind; and in Oberbeck's studio to-day — as in the treasures of the Vatican of yore — the close connexion of the Catholic religion with the highest developement of man's genius is so clear, that he who runs may read. But to feel all this," he paused and she added —

"Is something, but not all."

"The requirements of our religion," he continued, "are as stern as her forms are attractive. Oh! if enthusiasm might be accepted instead of sacrifice — if homage and sentiment sufficed — if the bowed knee and the enraptured heart were enough — who with the soul of an artist would not be at the same time the most religious of men? But to bow the knee, not in rapture, but in humiliation — in penance, not in ecstacy — to turn away from the cup of pleasure — But I shall be making my confession to you, Mary, if I go on."

He took her hand and drew her to himself, then, pointing to the river, he earnestly said: "Unstable

as water, I cannot excel. It is the same in every respect. Wishes, hopes, resolutions, projects, written in fair characters enough on the sand, but the first wave washes them away, and no token is left on the shore."

"O, but there is a token left, though you know it not yourself. To try and to fail, to fall and to rise again, is not like the stagnant depth of an immoveable indifference. Maurice, there is one thing I am firmly convinced of, and I bless God for it: you will be good, or you will be miserable."

"Then, indeed you must take care of my happiness, my stern little prophet, or I shall hardly thank you for your prediction."

At that moment, there was a splash of oars in the distance, and in a short time a small boat came in sight, which Gertrude and her brother often used when he was at home, but in which, for the first time, she had ventured alone. Her straw-hat had fallen back on her shoulders, and the dark blue ribbons with which it was tied hung loosely round her neck. The exercise had flushed her cheeks with the brightest crimson, and as she looked up towards the bridge, a smile illumined her face, like a ray of sunshine on a damask rose. Ceasing to row, she allowed the boat to float at pleasure, and it soon got entangled amongst the weeds and the water-cresses.

She bowed graciously and gaily to Maurice; and,

throwing to Mary a handful of forget-me-nots, cried out: "There, you shall have them all, except this white lotus, which I must keep to astonish Father Lifford with it this evening. But how am I ever to get out of this boat? I feel like the man in Molière's play: — '*Que diable suis-je venue faire dans cette galère.*'" In an instant Maurice was on the edge of the bank, and swinging himself forward by the help of a branch, he stepped into the boat, and seizing the oars, soon disentangled it from the weeds and set it afloat again. Then with a smile he said,

"Where does the Lady of the Lake, or the river rather, please to be taken?"

"By all means to the shore. I have collected treasures enough for to-day, and will not dare my fate any longer."

He pushed to the shore and threw the rope to Mary, who had come down to meet them; and jumping out of the boat, held his hand out to Gertrude, who, touching it lightly, with one bound sprang on to the bank. She stood there in the shade of the dark alder trees with her red Indian shawl carelessly thrown round her shoulders, and in her hand the broad leaves of the lotus, which she used as a fan. Her attitude and her figure were as graceful as possible. There was something so free and yet so reserved in each gesture and in each glance. She had a way that was peculiar to herself, of drawing back her head while

she raised her eyes, and of looking as it were from under her long eye-lashes; and the modulations of her voice, her distinct and musical articulation, were equally uncommon.

"I wish you joy of your return, Maurice, and I hope you are as happy to find yourself in this country again as I should be to leave it. Mary and I have often talked about you."

"And you once had the kindness to write to me; I shall never forget it."

"Shall you stay here some time?"

"Yes. I hope so."

"Then we may often meet again — good bye, dear Mary — good bye, Maurice!"

She drew her shawl over her breast, hastily tied the ribbons of her hat, and disappeared along one of the green alleys that led straight to the Grange. Maurice drew Mary's arm in his, and they turned towards the village.

"Well, now you have seen Lady-Bird again, what do you think of her?"

"I don't know exactly, — she does not seem proud."

"O, no! not at all in some ways."

"She is like a picture I once saw."

"In Italy?"

"Yes, in Venice. It had that same eager wistful look that she has. Is she happy, Mary?"

"I think not; her home is rather a gloomy one for a young girl, and she is painfully anxious to leave it."

"I suppose she is very clever?"

"She is very amusing — very droll at times, and strangely eloquent at others. She reads an immense deal, I believe."

"Does she care for music?"

"She has a most beautiful voice, — quite a wonderful voice; but never having been taught, I don't suppose she sings well — what *you* would call well."

"She must be dreadfully bored in that old house. I remember how stiff her father used to look, and her mother always ill, and the dear old priest so absent, and a little cross, too, sometimes."

"Not really cross, I think, but Lady-Bird tries him by the odd things she says and does; and he does not perhaps quite understand how bored she is, and that even to make any one angry with her is a sort of relief to the dulness of her life."

"Does she come to see you often?"

"Yes, pretty often; by fits and starts. Sometimes she comes every day, and then perhaps we are weeks without seeing her."

"Does she never go out into society, I mean?"

"No. I do not believe she has made a single acquaintance in the neighbourhood. Nobody ever dines at Lifford Grange, I hear, except the agent or the doctor, and that very seldom."

"Then she has no admirers, I suppose."

"O dear no, I should think not, unless —"

"Unless what?"

"Unless Mr. Mark Apley was one. He is often riding about here, and going backwards and forwards on the road between the Grange and Stonehouseleigh, that is, when he is at home, which is only at one time of the year. When we meet him he looks at her as if he thought her very pretty, but he has never been introduced to her."

"And how does she look on those occasions?"

"Half proudly and half shyly, as if not sorry to be admired, and yet impatient at being watched."

"Here are her flowers," Maurice said, as they entered the little sitting-room of the cottage, "shall I put them into this vase?" and without waiting for an answer, he arranged them in such a graceful way that Mary stopped to admire it.

"Here is your pianoforte arrived at last," she said. "Now I shall hear some of the things that fine ladies and great musicians have admired."

"The fine ladies more than the great musicians, I am afraid. I was the fashion amongst them, and they

made much of me and of my songs, but even in my art — which I love with passion — I am too unstable to excel."

He ran his hand over the keys, and hummed a tune which had something of the wildness of a Neapolitan air, with the tenderness of a German melody.

"How pretty that is!" Mary exclaimed.

"It is my 'Lady-Bird,'" he said, "the song I wrote to you about, which I composed last year at Naples. They used to encore it every night."

"No wonder, for it is gay and yet there is something that touches one in it, something of sadness, which I suppose must be the perfection of music."

"Mary," he said in a moment, as they still sat together at the pianoforte, "I have thought of a plan which, if I can carry it into effect, will enable me to remain here several months without being a burthen on dear mother, and which may also be of use to me when I settle in London. I think I might give lessons in the neighbourhood. Don't you think it would answer? I did so at Florence one year." Mary smiled her assent, and Mrs. Redmond was consulted. She produced a bit of paper, and had soon written in pencil the names of several young ladies and gentlemen whom she sanguinely supposed would be sure to take lessons. The fact was that there was no music-master in that part of the country, and the deficiency

had often been regretted by Miss Apley, who was on all occasions Mrs. Redmond's oracle.

"Don't you think, mother, that you might call on Miss Apley to-morrow, and tell her that Maurice means to give lessons? She wished particularly to see you, I know, about the work at the school, and you know you don't dislike paying her a visit."

"Yes, Mary darling, but I am a little foolish about asking a favour."

Maurice coloured, and Mary with her quick perception keenly felt that he was annoyed at the expression her mother had used, and instantly exclaimed,

"But, dearest mother, do you know that I can hardly consider it as a favour. Maurice's talent is not a common one, and the advantage of taking lessons from him, in this out-of-the-way place, is a benefit received more than a favour conferred."

"But perhaps she does not know that he has so much talent, dear, and if I say so she will think it is all my partiality."

"O for Heaven's sake, mother," Maurice impatiently exclaimed, "say nothing at all about me. I will speak myself to Father Lifford. But whatever you do, don't puff me; I can't endure that."

He played a noisy bravura which put a stop to further conversation; and thoughts of Italy, of the women who had flattered him, of the friends who had applauded him, of the way in which genius was con-

sidered there as superior to any other distinctions, and the footing of intimacy on which he had been with persons of the highest rank rose to his mind, and made him silent and abstracted during the rest of the evening.

He compared these recollections with the aspect of the little room in which they were sitting, and for the first time disadvantageously; for, whether from the love of change and contrast which have great charms for persons of his disposition, or from affection for Mary, the very soberness and thoroughly English character of his childhood's home had been agreeable to him. But now he thought again of the palaces, the villas, the ilex avenues, the orange-gardens of Italy; and, as he looked at Mary quietly working at the table by the light of a single tallow candle, she did not seem to him less pleasing than before, but he said to himself, "Yes, I shall transplant you, my English daisy, to that bright land. Its fervid sunshine will animate that somewhat too calm expression. Its influences will call forth all the feeling and the intelligence which this passionless existence would end by stifling. When I produce my first opera at the Scala or the Fenice, how that pale face will flush with excitement, how that breast — which is now breathing so calmly — will throb with emotion, when she will have to witness the failure or hail the success of what costs me almost more than my life's blood! — and

those eyes, that always seem to turn more readily to Heaven than to earth, will they not flash with triumph and sparkle with delight, if the enthusiastic cries and the wild applause of an Italian audience call on the successful maestro to come and receive the meed of praise which they so well know how to bestow? O, my quiet gentle Mary, you must drink with me of that bewildering cup — even though you should have to share my sufferings too."

Ten o'clock struck, and Mrs. Redmond and Mary folded up their work and prepared to go to bed. As Maurice followed them into the passage, he called Mary to the garden door, and putting his hand on her arm, he said in a whisper, "Which had you rather be, intensely happy at times, and very miserable at others, or never know the extremes of human bliss and woe?" She looked surprised and almost pained at the question, but after an instant's hesitation answered, timidly raising her eyes to his, "I suppose that I have already been too happy not to have to suffer in proportion; but come what may — a higher joy or a deeper grief, I care not if the last reach me alone, and the first is shared with you."

"Angel of goodness!" he fervently exclaimed, "and I, on the contrary, was wishing just now to force thee to partake the torments of my feverish existence. Keep thy divine peace of heart, my Mary, and Heaven forbid that in my wayward folly I should ever seek to dis-

turb it." "Why should you, indeed?" she ejaculated with unaffected surprise. He smiled, but felt a little disappointed. Why, he could scarcely tell. She did not guess his thoughts; how could she? But others had done so, and life becomes flat and stale when everything has to be explained, and he could not always explain himself even to himself; and a cloud was on his brow as he shut himself up in his room, and — flinging open the window — he threw himself on his bed, and snatching up a pencil and paper he began to compose, but not music. His mind was not tuned to harmony just then, but he wrote rambling verses, and went to sleep with some unfinished lines in his hand.

CHAPTER V.

"Noble et légère elle folâtre,
Et l'herbe que foulent ses pas,
Sous le poids de son pied d'albâtre,
Se courbe et ne se brise pas.
Sur ses traits, dont le doux ovale
Borne l'ensemble gracieux,
Les couleurs que la nue étale
Se fondent pour charmer les yeux.
À la pourpre qui teint sa joue,
On dirait que l'aube s'y joue;
Son front léger s'élève et plane
Sur un cou flexible, élancé,
Comme sur le flot diaphane
Un cygne mollement bercé."

LAMARTINE.

"Music is the food of love."

SHAKESPEARE.

How strange it is that people think it worth while to make the best of themselves to themselves, to equivocate with their own consciences, and lie to their own hearts, while all the time they know it is of no use — that it is the shallowest of deceptions — that even a Queen's speech, or a ministerial harangue are not more devoid of any pretensions to sincerity, than their special pleadings at the bar of their own understandings. But still the inward and intimate *sham* is carried on, and doubtless, the thief and the assassin have an internal advocate who presses for an acquittal,

even while the dagger is sharpening and the booty secured. There are some, indeed, who never appear to commune with themselves, whose minds are like railway travelling, never stopping but at certain stations, never looking beyond a certain terminus.

Mr. Lifford might have been of this number, and if so, his mental line of road must have lain through the dullest and dreariest of intellectual regions. It had gone on its way crushing and extinguishing in himself and in others everything that gives light and joy to existence. Whether, in the language of St. Paul, his thoughts ever accused and excused one another was doubtful. Perhaps he was too essentially despotic to allow even of inward remonstrance, and the rebellion of his own conscience, if it ever broke out, was put down by the iron rigidity of his will.

But in his daughter's character there were other elements at work besides that same *will*, which she had inherited from him. Some of the tenderness of her mother's character was mixed with it. This had seldom been called forth, but a gleam of it was now and then visible which took by surprise those who were accustomed to her reckless moods, and her stubborn resolution. She had one of those natures that could not be governed by ordinary means, and — like the Spartan boy — she would have suffered a thousand tortures before she yielded the threats or submitted to violence. Two or three times, between the

age of childhood and that at which she had now arrived, she had come into open collision with her father. Once, in a paroxysm of passion, an imprecation escaped her lips, which the instant it was uttered terrified her to that degree, that she gave a scream of horror, and fell on her knees before him. If he had opened his arms, she would probably have loved him from that moment with all the energy of her strange character. Had he been moved to anger or to indignation, she would have continued to sue for pardon and reconciliation; but he left her with a sneer, and she remained alone with her remorse and her anger, and neither could master the other, till some days afterwards in confession — that secret arena where so many fierce battles with self are fought — the proud spirit yielded; and, after shedding torrents of tears, pale with emotion, she went straight from the chapel to her father's room, implored a forgiveness which was coldly granted, returned to the feet of one who as his Lord's representative was always kind though at other times stern, and who, after absolving and blessing her, dismissed her in peace.

Good was it for Gertrude that she should have known what such a conquest effects, what such a moment is. She never forgot it. There are seeds sometimes sown that lie for long years under a hardened surface, but the rain may some day fall, the sun may one day shine, and the harvest may be reaped.

There was one element in Gertrude's character which resembled neither father nor mother, and that was a wild gaiety — which was particularly attractive in one as beautiful, as naturally clever, and as original as she was. It was almost impossible for any one to resist its fascination. Even Father Lifford — who thought it bordered on levity, and conceived it to be rather a point of duty to snub her — could not help at times feeling its influence, and when she succeeded in making him smile it put her in good humour for the rest of the day, as she used to tell Mary Grey.

It would have been impossible in so dull an existence, and with such a craving for change and amusement of any sort, that the return of an old playfellow who formerly contributed so much to her enjoyment should have been indifferent to her, or that she should not have been ready to renew an acquaintance which had once given her so much pleasure. His letters to Mary had interested her imagination; she felt curious to see how far he was in love with her quiet friend, and whether her feelings for him had any tinge of romance, or partook of what Gertrude considered the common-place nature of her character, for thus she estimated one of the most *un*common-place persons in the world, one of those rare self-forgetting natures that have more feeling than passion, more heroism than courage, and more tenderness than sensibility.

A day or two after the meeting at the bridge she

sent her maid to tell Mary that she meant to sketch that afternoon in Oakland Chase, and that if she had nothing else to do it would be very kind of her to meet her there, as it was some time since they had seen each other in comfort. The message was delivered, and the expected assent given, and at the same spot where, about three years before, this story opened, Gertrude and Mary were again sitting — the first drawing with untaught skill the old trees which had been the favourite haunts of their childhood, and the other busy with some plain work which she had brought with her.

The summer was far advanced — there were no flowers on the grass around them, and the birds had ceased their songs, but the rich foliage and deep shade of the forest were in all the glory of maturity Gertrude had expected that Maurice would join them; but he did not do so, and she felt disappointed. Mary's conversation seemed to her more uninteresting than usual, and at last she abruptly asked,

"Where is Maurice? What does he do with himself during these long summer days?"

"He is reading out there by the stile," Mary said. "He walked with me as far, and then said he should be in our way, and that he would amuse himself with his book till I came back."

"But what nonsense that was to think he should be in our way. I hope he does not mean to avoid

me, Mary. Does he remember what good friends we used to be?"

"I believe, dear Lady-Bird, that is one of the reasons that he feels shy with you now. He says he cannot expect that you will consider him as an old friend."

"And why not — I should like to know? Have I so many friends that I am likely to be ungracious to the only ones I have known in childhood? I have observed, Mary, that you are sometimes inclined to be formal and ceremonious with me, and it bores me to death. O yes, to death," she repeated, with her pencil on her lips, and peeping into Mary's bonnet, who was shaking her head and smiling. "What a pity it is," she exclaimed, "that we cannot make an exchange!"

"What exchange, Lady-Bird?"

"Of our homes, I mean — I should have been very happy at the cottage, and you would have been a sort of model young lady at Lifford Grange. You would never have said or done a foolish thing, and have looked as steady and demure as any of the family pictures. As it is, my uncle says that you are a pattern of perfection, and then sighs and shrugs his shoulders as he looks at me. Don't you wish that you were Miss Lifford? Is it not a very enviable destiny to spend one's life at Lifford Grange — a sort of

secular cloister, of the Carthusian order, for we never talk without necessity."

"You are not following the rule *now*, I suppose," Mary said. "But, dear Lady-Bird, I am not sure that you would find my life very gay, though *I* feel it to be happy."

"Why, it must be a *little* amusing to have a lover, which will never happen to me. *You* would never have thought of it, if it had not come in your way, but be candid — is it not amusing?"

Mary coloured, and shook her head again — "Now, mind your drawing, Lady-Bird, and do not talk in that manner."

"Well, I will not, if you will go and tell Maurice that he is not to keep out of my way, and fancy that we are not to be friends as we used to be."

"I will go, if you will promise not to talk as you did just now, especially before him."

"O no, I won't — go your ways, Mary Grey. Is it not a '*douce violence*,' to send you on such an errand? In the meantime I will finish this old oak, and you shall have it as a reward."

Mary walked quietly away down one of the avenues of the Chase, and Gertrude, watching her as she disappeared amongst the trees, said to herself — "She is like the 'Bonny Kilmeny who ga'ed up the glen,' pure as pure could be. There is no one so good as Mary, I do believe. She does not seem to care much about Mau-

rice, but I shall know more of that when I have seen them together." And this last word putting her in mind of a pretty song that she had once learnt, and that began — "We have been friends together, in sunshine and in shade," she warbled it at intervals, when not too much engrossed by her drawing.

When Mary returned, and Maurice with her, she greeted him with a playful kindness that made him at once feel at his ease; and sitting down on the stump of a tree opposite to the one she occupied, his heightened colour subsided, and his manner, which had been a little stiff at first, became natural and animated. She asked him questions which drew from him some lively descriptions of places and of persons abroad, and the bright smile with which she responded to anything that amused her, carried him back to the days when to relate a story that would make Lady-Bird laugh or cry was the height of his ambition. He was surprised to find how much she knew about pictures and statues, poets and musicians, — how well acquainted she was with the history and the literature of Italy, and with what rapid changes of manner she seemed transformed in an instant from a wayward child into an eloquent woman; and then again, when apparently most in earnest, would break suddenly off into some strain of fun and nonsense.

The sort of conversation that established itself between them was entirely new to Mary; it interested

but puzzled her. Maurice had been living a great deal in society abroad, and had acquired a readiness and fluency of language which nothing but the habit of conversation can give, except in one as naturally gifted as Gertrude was. Her singular intelligence made her instinctively guess what others learnt by degrees. She would have made a speech in Parliament, or preached a sermon, or acted a play, or harangued a mob if called upon to do so; nothing came amiss to her, but solitude and constraint. She was very quick also in discerning the characters of others, except when baffled by one of such extraordinary simplicity as Mary's. Maurice she judged at once. "More talent than ability; more ardour than vigour; more imagination than sense, and sensibility than feeling: an abundance of words at his command, and a sufficient amount of thought to turn that abundance to account." This view of the young artist was rapidly sketched in her mind, as she sat conversing with him, with all the *laisser-aller* that was habitual to her, and the animation which a new amusement called forth.

The drawing was not finished till the sun was setting, and Jane had appeared to escort Gertrude home. She gave it to Mary, as she had promised. It was the old hollow tree in which they used to act "O'Connor's child." That evening Mary spoke twice to Maurice without attracting his notice. His eyes were fixed on the sketch.

"I do not think M. d'Arberg would like her as much as you," he said at last, as if he were answering a question.

She laughed, and said "Who?"

"Lady-Bird. She would not suit him, I think. She is too like Undine."

"Who is Undine — an Italian you knew?"

"O no, dear Mary; she only lives in Fairyland. Lady-Bird knows all about her, I am sure."

"She knows a great deal," Mary said with a sigh. Her gravity made Maurice laugh.

"Not how to make a home as happy as you would, my darling Mary."

"She might if she *loved* her home. It is so easy to make those we love happy — that is, if they love us," she timidly added. He pushed aside the oak-tree, and drew his chair close to hers, and told her the story of his opera — the great work he was meditating; and she listened to it for the tenth time, as if it had been the first.

When that evening the clock struck ten, and with a Cinderella-like punctuality she got up and folded her work, he said to her, gaily, "You are worth a hundred Lady-Birds, Mary!" She put her hand on his mouth; he kissed it, and whispered, "You will not mind, will you, if I play for an hour or two longer? Dear mother does not, I know; she is too deaf to hear it upstairs."

"I do mind, — you ought to go to bed and *rest;* you will wake like a ghost to-morrow. Like the ghost in the last scene of the opera."

The opera had now become a conspicuous point in her thoughts. He did not rehearse it oftener in imagination than she did. Never having been in her life in a theatre, she had a very vague idea of a dramatic performance; but it was enough for her that it was his dream, his work, his object; the story was founded on their favourite ballad of "O'Connor's child," and she could fancy, she said, how beautiful it would be to see it all acted, as they used to act it, and at the same time to hear his music telling in another way all they used to feel about it.

As she lay awake in her room that night, listening to the sounds of his playing below, and watching the light clouds quickly passing over the heavens, she felt angry with herself that the words, "You are worth a hundred Lady-Birds," seemed to mix with the music, and to be written in the skies.

In about a fortnight's time, Maurice had obtained two or three pupils in the neighbourhood, and by degrees he became known; his reputation established itself, and he grew to be somewhat of a lion in Lancashire. He was sometimes invited to some of the country-houses where he gave lessons. His perfectly gentleman-like manners, his good looks, his knowledge of French and Italian, and his really beautiful

playing, made him a general favourite wherever he went. On Sunday he always played the organ at the Catholic chapel at Stonehouseleigh; and strangers used often to come there to hear the exquisite music with which he accompanied the different parts, and filled up the pauses of the service. To Mary it sounded like the strains of Heaven itself, and her heart and her love were both so pure, that there was nothing unworthy of the place or of the hour in the joy that overflowed that heart, as, with her face buried in her hands, she felt as if he were translating into melody the speechless adoration which was rising from her own soul.

Gertrude always came there for vespers, — sometimes with Father Lifford, or else with her maid; and at the conclusion of the service, as the congregation dispersed, she usually waited in the churchyard while he was in the sacristy, or Jane was lingering with her friends from the village. Her seat was a tombstone near the gate, and the simple inscription upon it, "Requiescat in pace," contrasted with the expression of her face. Strangers sometimes remarked how beautiful, but how restless it was. They would have wished to say to her, "Rest in peace," but that time was not come. Whatever power religion exerted over her tended to a struggle, and interior strife was the result of salutary impressions. Better for her that it was so; the best of such characters and intellects as hers is the

difficulty they find in self-deception They err, they offend, the will is stubborn, and the heart undisciplined — but they were gone too deep into themselves, and too far beyond themselves to act the part of the false prophet to their own souls, and to cry out "Peace where there is no peace."

One day as they were walking back from the chapel, Gertrude asked Mary with a look of great interest, if it was true that Maurice had been giving lessons in the neighbourhood, and on Mary's answering in the affirmative exclaimed, "Then I shall take some, that is," — turning to him, for he just overtook them at that moment, — "that is, if you will be kind enough to undertake a beginner who has never had any regular instruction, whose fingers are as stiff as her voice is unmanageable. I shall try your patience dreadfully, but will you?"

He coloured, bowed, but did not look pleased. She remarked it, and with her usual impetuosity, turned to Mary and said —

"Why is he so cross about it? Don't you like to teach me, Maurice?"

"Yes," he answered, colouring still more deeply, "but I cannot bear —" He broke off suddenly, and added, "I mean that I do not know if I have an hour to spare that will suit you. When would you wish me to come?"

"When could you?"

"At five o'clock."

"Yes — at five o'clock — three times a week — that will be delightful! That hour is just the one that will suit mamma. Do you know, Mary, that music is, I find, one of the few things that mamma cares about. When I asked her about taking lessons, and told her that Maurice was giving them, she seemed quite pleased, and said that the pianoforte should be put in the room next to her's; and that when she was well enough, the folding-doors should be opened, and she would like to listen. She thinks it will do her good to hear a little music. She has never heard any since she left Spain — except the little songs you used to come sometimes and sing to her when you were a boy," she added, turning to him.

Maurice smiled in a constrained manner, and asked which day he should come. It was settled for the next Tuesday, and he took his leave with a cloud on his brow.

When Mary asked him afterwards — with an unconscious uneasiness which she could hardly define, and which she would not perhaps have felt had he gladly accepted Gertrude as a pupil — whether it annoyed him to give lessons at the Grange, he answered impatiently: "You do not suppose, do you, that it is pleasant to be treated as a friend, and to be considered and paid as a music-master." She felt depressed, but said it gave her much pleasure to think that his playing

might be an enjoyment to Mrs. Lifford who had so few pleasant moments in her life, and that it would bring Gertrude into frequent companionship with her mother, which might prove an inestimable comfort to both. He assented, but remained restless and disturbed during the remainder of the day.

But after the first lesson had been given, his annoyance seemed to have passed away, and he told Mrs. Redmond and Mary, how strange it had seemed to him to find Mrs. Lifford again on that same couch where he used to see her when a boy — only still paler and thinner than he remembered her then. "There she lies wrapped up in shawls, and propped up by pillows — her face so white and wan that it looks as if one could see through it, and her eyes appearing unnaturally large and bright. After I had given Lady-Bird some instructions, she asked me to play something very gently, as she thought her mother would like it. I thought, at that minute, of Mozart's Agnus Dei, and I played it very softly, but with a great deal of expression. I never in my life tried so much to play well — not when I was most anxious to make an effect at a concert, as I did then to please that pale woman who had not heard any music for sixteen years. When I had gone on for about twenty minutes, varying the air with a few simple chords, I left off, and looking through the door towards her couch I saw that she had covered her face with her thin transparent hands,

and that large tears were rolling through her fingers. She called Lady-Bird in a faint voice, and told her to go on with the lesson — that she had heard enough of the soul of music for one day. This was said in broken English, but I liked the expression so much. There is something very quiet and solemn about those two rooms. Hers is so full of pictures and silk hangings, and all sorts of foreign-looking things, it looks quite like a chapel; and the next is a library, and opens on the garden. Lady-Bird has a beautiful voice, but it bores her to practise much, and what bores her I suspect she never does; as to playing she will not even attempt it. But she is coming here to-morrow at three o'clock to look over the music I brought you, and to choose the songs she will learn."

"O then, it is singing lessons you give her, Maurice dear?" Mrs. Redmond asked, as he began to turn over a heap of books by the pianoforte.

"I suppose so, mother," he answered with a smile. "Anything she chooses to learn; but one might as well try to teach the lark to sit still on a bush, and practise her trills, as make Lady-Bird apply herself to anything but what she fancies at the moment."

"She will try your patience very much, dear Maurice."

"O I shall play and sing to her, she will learn in that way; she has so much genius."

CHAPTER VI.

"'T is amazement more than love,
Which her radiant eyes do move;
If less splendour wait on thine,
Yet they so benignly shine,
I would turn my dazzled sight
To behold their milder light.
But as hard 't is to destroy
That high flame as to enjoy;
Which how eas'ly I may do,
Heav'n (as eas'ly scaled) does know."

WALLER.

THE next day Gertrude was true to her appointment. She was in high spirits, — sung a roulade as she arrived at the green gate, better than any she had accomplished the day before; told Jane to call again in an hour; and, asking leave to gather some of the honeysuckles and jasmine on the wall which felt hot with the sun, she stood some time outside the house, playing with Mrs. Redmond's cat who was purring on the window-seat. She kept gently pinching its paw, and then kissing it to make up for it.

"I am sure Mary never teased anything in her life; did she, Mrs. Redmond? But it is a bad plan to make people too happy, Mary, — they say it never answers; and though 'they say' is a very spiteful, odious, and tiresome imp, I believe he is right sometimes. Puss

will be much more glad to see me the next time I come, because I have plagued her a little, and then been very kind. *Does* Mary ever tease you, Maurice?"

"Only I believe by never giving me an opportunity of finding fault with her," he answered from within the room, where he was writing out some music.

"O, but that is a very great fault, indeed, — perhaps the most provoking one a woman can have. Won't you reform, Mary? It is very hard on poor Maurice. Men do so like to scold and lecture, one should not deprive them of their little amusements. It is selfish to be always so good. Father Lifford, for instance, how bored he would be if I was as good as you and mamma. Othello's occupation would be gone."

After going on for some time in this way, she came into the room and began to examine the music. Opening a volume of manuscript songs, her attention was arrested by one, entitled, "The Blind Man to his Mistress."

"Is this your own composition," she asked of Maurice, as sitting down at the pianoforte she tried the notes.

"Yes," he answered;" I wrote both the words and the music after seeing, at a ball, a blind man who was engaged to be married to a young girl, — he seemed to listen to the sound of her footsteps while she was dancing with others."

The poetry ran thus: —

"Yes, others say they love, but is the love of those who see
The same deep undivided love my blindness gives to thee?
O do those who can gaze each day on the fair earth and sky, —
Do they watch as *I* do for each faint whispered word or sigh?
And do they count it joy to hear thy footstep and thy voice,
And in thy slightest touch, as in the greatest bliss, rejoice?
And do they breathe more freely when the free and blessed air
That fans their aching brow has played through thy long floating hair?
And does a sense of gloom oppress their heavy heart with weight
Unspeakable if e'er in vain thy coming they await?
O, if they love and *see*, can they e'er gaze on aught but thee?
If so, their love is not such love as my blind dreams of thee!"

Gertrude read these lines, and seemed thoughtful for a moment.

"I envy," she exclaimed, "the power of rendering into verse the passing impressions of the hour,—of fixing, as it were, into shape that floating poetry which haunts the mind, and makes us what wise people call romantic. I imagine that poets are much less so than those who do not spend their capital of imagination upon paper; and, judging from the lives of poets and persons of genius, it seems to me that in general they have less deep feeling than silent people, — I do not mean people who are not talkative, but those who cannot tell themselves their own story."

"But, my dear, everybody must know their own story," Mrs. Redmond put in, "and if so, they can tell it, I suppose, though not, I dare say, pleasantly for other people to hear: indeed, I forget a great many things that have happened to me, and I suppose that is what you mean."

"I believe," Maurice said, "that imagination makes

people suffer with tenfold power from all the afflictions that come in their way. It awakens presentiments of evil, recalls past sufferings, multiplies causes of annoyance, and wears out the spirits almost as much by the stimulus of fictitious and feverish enjoyment, as by its fanciful miseries."

"And yet you would not be without it, would you?" she said, turning suddenly round, and fixing her eyes upon him. He looked at her for a second, and then hastily said, "No; we sometimes cherish the cause of our sufferings;" and then, snatching up another heap of music, he carried it to the pianoforte, and turned it over in a hurried manner.

She repeated his last words, "'Cherish the cause of our sufferings!' — difficult, I should think, if not impossible. But, if so, it confirms what I was saying just now. You see, Mary, one must make people suffer sometimes, that they may appreciate their happiness on the whole."

Mary's colour rose, and she looked graver than the occasion required. There was some emotion in her voice as she answered, "A worthless happiness it would be, given by such means, and bought at such a price."

A serious reply to a gay remark always throws a degree of embarrassment into the conversation where it occurs; and it was the case in this instance. The impression was not dissipated till after Maurice

had played two or three things, out of which Gertrude chose what she wished to learn. She then put on her bonnet and shawl, and stood a few minutes talking to Mrs. Redmond, and admiring her knitting. As she was preparing to go, she said to Maurice,

"Then to-morrow, at five?"

"Yes," he answered; "but perhaps I may not be quite exact, as it is a long way from here to Woodlands, and my horse is not over brisk. Perhaps you will not mind if I am a few minutes late."

"No; I shall practise this song in the meantime. You give lessons at Woodlands, then?"

"Yes, to Miss Harriet and Miss Fanny."

"Are they promising pupils?"

"Diligent ones," he said with a smile. "They asked me a great deal about you the other day."

"Did they? I hope you will not give me a bad character the next time they do so. Is Harriet Apley the one with a plump figure and rosy cheeks?"

"Just so; and Fanny has dark eyes and a pale complexion."

"Is there a governess in the house?"

"Yes, for the youngest daughter. She must be about your brother's age."

"By the way, Mary," Gertrude exclaimed, "I had a letter from Edgar the other day. He is growing so priggish, poor dear boy, it is quite ridiculous. He talks of quarterings, and heraldry, and old families,

and of all that sort of trash to papa's heart's content, and my particular *dis*content. I shall have no patience with him if he bores me with any of that nonsense when he comes home."

"But is it not rather nice of him to care about what interests his father so much?"

Gertrude sat down again at the table opposite Mary and said — "Now that is the sort of thing about which we shall never agree. I think your notions about always trying to please people, and making one's self agreeable to them, and accommodating one's self to all their fancies, are next door to hypocrisy. If I was to sit smiling benignantly for instance, and looking all delight when papa and Father Lifford talk politics, whereas I feel ready to bite my lips through with vexation at having to be silent and not argue against what seems to me such absurd prejudice. I should really feel ashamed of myself."

"But does it never occur to you that they may be right and you may be wrong? There is so much to be said on both sides of every question which does not involve points of faith and morality, and should you not give those to whom you owe so much deference at least the benefit of a doubt?"

"To hear a *mésalliance* spoken off as a crime! It makes me so indignant; and that Father Lifford especially should talk in that way! It is so against the spirit of religion."

"I am not so sure of that," Mary exclaimed with some warmth. "We cannot judge these points, or estimate the evil of such things. I cannot but think, Lady-Bird, that you are too positive in your opinion."

"I am astonished, Mary," Maurice rejoined, "that *you* should object to that. I do not know any one so obstinately resolved as you are on certain points."

"Is not she, Maurice?" Gertrude cried with exultation. "I know so well the expression of her face when anybody approaches one of her strongholds. Half defying, half deprecating, she guards her opinions like an angry dove her nest."

Maurice laughed and looked fondly at Mary, who, with a little reluctant smile, gently said —

"Principles — not opinions."

"O come, Mary, that won't do. And why can't I have my political opinions?"

"Nonsense, Lady-Bird, you know very well that you have no such thing. It is all from the spirit of contradiction that you dislike kings and heraldry and all that sort of thing. I dare say that if you had had to sit without speaking and to hear republics and radicals and democracy praised, you would have been by this time a determined aristocrat."

"Heaven forbid!" Maurice ejaculated. Mrs. Redmond looked up from her work with alarm.

"Why, you are not a Radical, Maurice, I hope?'

"No," he answered, "but I hate all distinctions of class and artificial divisions. What I do like is a spirit above prejudice, and the disposition to estimate things according to what they are, not according to what they are *called*."

This lucid explanation satisfied Mrs. Redmond, and she finished putting up a small parcel of dried violets which Gertrude had promised to employ that evening as a remedy against a slight cough which she complained of. It so happened that the sheet of paper which she used for the purpose was one on the inside of which Maurice had been scribbling the day before, and had forgotten to destroy, so that when Gertrude undid the packet that evening her attention was attracted by the writing within the sheet, which had escaped Mrs. Redmond's observation, and the following lines met her eyes —

"Do I not love thee? No, I feel for earth and sky and sea
And all things beautiful in life, all that I feel for thee.
Do I not love thee? No, I gaze on rose or lily bright
With the same look I fix on thee, of wonder and delight.
Do I not love thee? No, my ears in the spring-time rejoice
As much in the birds' songs as in the music of thy voice.
Do I not love thee? No, the stars, the whispering winds, the flowers,
The murmur of the waves at night, and the sweet citron bowers,
Have breathed into my soul a sense of beauty and of love
As keen as thy bewitching eyes have ever made me prove."

"Are these Maurice's own writing, I wonder?" Gertrude said to herself, as she put down the paper. "And are the bewitching eyes he alludes to mine?"

She was sitting at her dressing-table, and looked into the glass, as the doubt — if doubt it was — suggested itself. What she saw there did not tend to do away with the supposition — and it was not an unpleasant one, especially as it was an expression of intense admiration, and not of love that the verses contained. For Maurice to have been in love with her would have been exceedingly inconvenient and tiresome. It would have raised all sorts of questions and discussions between herself and her conscience, and interfered with an intercourse which was beginning to amuse her; but to be worshipped as a star, a bird, a wave, or a flower, was perfectly safe, right, entertaining, and agreeable, and with this conviction she retired to rest, and the next day looked forward with pleasure to her music lesson.

These music lessons became quite a new, strange enjoyment to Mrs. Lifford. When she was well enough the doors between her rooms were opened, and Jane was released from her post of chaperon. During that whole hour her eyes were fixed on her daughter. She gazed on her as at a living picture — each lovely contour of feature, each dimple, each glance she learnt as it were by heart, and the full tones of her deep sweet voice vibrated in her soul with almost painful power. In her mind, so long accustomed to silence and meditation, every impression took that form, each pleasurable feeling became an aspiration, and every

emotion turned into a prayer. Quite different was the way in which that hour was spent by the pupil and the master. It was one of much enjoyment to both, nor did either of them think that enjoyment wrong. The love of music, the desire of improvement on the one hand, the interest of imparting instruction to one as highly endowed as his scholar on the other, were legitimate sources of pleasure and excitement. Sometimes there were pauses in the lesson, occasioned by questions and answers, suggested by the music they studied or the recollections it called up. Gertrude liked to hear of Italy, and when tired of practising she asked for descriptions, which Maurice was ready enough to give. He often talked of his friend and patron, M. d'Arberg, for whom he had an enthusiastic admiration, and quoted his thoughts and his sayings. The glimpses of the world which she thus obtained greatly piqued her curiosity. No one else had ever talked to her of what she was only acquainted with through books, and though she was and felt herself to be much cleverer than Maurice, still he had wherewith to amuse and to interest her exceedingly.

It would have been impossible for him not to delight in giving her pleasure, and the pauses between the songs were sometimes so long that Mrs. Lifford would inquire if the lesson was finished — which reminded them that it was a lesson and not a conversa-

tion which they had to carry on. At the end of the hour Gertrude often desired him to play or to sing some of her favourite airs, some of Schubert's melodies, or a Spanish Guerilla song, or a symphony of Beethoven; and then, sitting by her mother's couch — with her hand locked in hers — she dreamed of scenes and of places which her fancy conjured up. It was quite a new feeling to the mother and the daughter to enjoy anything together, and Mrs. Lifford never perceived that there was anything objectionable in these lessons. She knew nothing of the world, or of any heart but her own — so pure a one that it had never taught her to suspect evil or danger, and indeed in this instance there was no evil to be discerned, and if there was danger it was remote. Had she been more experienced and keen-sighted she might have observed both admiration and — at times — emotion in Maurice's countenance, and in Gertrude's a consciousness of that admiration and a certain pleasur in it, albeit not the slightest approach to anythin beyond a momentary gratification at its existence. S' might, indeed, have felt, when they practised togetl the beautiful music of Anna Bolena, and sang v great expression, the air "*Fin dell etá piú tenera*," Madame de Maintenon when she wrote to Racine the pupils of St. Cyr had acted Andromaqué, ' *petites filles ont si bien joué votre tragédie qu'elles rejoueront de leur vie;*" she might have said, "*I*

si bien chanté qu'ils ne le rechanteront de leur vie." But gentle, kind, and pure-hearted as she was — and intelligent, too, in some ways — very eloquent in her native tongue, to a degree that would have surprised those who never heard her speak but in broken English, she was not endowed with Madame de Maintenon's talent for government, and would never have ruled St. Cyr or swayed the heart of the Grand Monarque.

And so these lessons went on for several weeks. Maurice framed his engagements so as not to omit them. He was very busy and in good spirits, his health improved daily, and he was as fond of Mary as ever. He always talked to her a great deal of Gertrude. He explained to her that he admired her as a master-piece of creation, as a type of loveliness, an artist in soul, an ideal of beauty and of genius; but that it would be as unreasonable to suppose that his admiration of her had anything to do with *love*, as to have accused him of being in love with Titian's Flora, or the portrait of the Cenci, because he had spent hours in contemplation before them, or because he worshipped intellect, talent, and beauty in art and in Nature.

Mary listened rather gravely to all this, and said she thought he worshipped beauty a great deal too much in everything — that it was a sort of idolatry. "What did it signify," he answered, "if he loved her

better than anything else in the world?" There was no answering that, but her brow had often now an anxious expression, and the thought of "deep violet eyes with a light shining in them, like a ray of sunshine through a dark heartsease," was apt to "come painfully often between her and the midnight skies."

One is rather prone — especially in a novel — to be unjust towards those who do right things in a disagreeable manner, and to blame the conduct of disagreeable people without sufficiently considering their actions in themselves. Some very sensible proceeding may meet with general condemnation if it is the act of the author's *bête noire*, and if he has been fortunate enough to inspire his reader with a sympathetic aversion. Mrs. Lifford was amiable and interesting both from her character and her sufferings, and scarcely to blame for an ignorance which in her position was very natural, but her blindness and her imprudence were undeniable; and an event soon took place which roused painful feelings in more hearts than one, and deepened Gertrude's resentment against her father. Yet in this instance, though his mode of acting was neither kind nor judicious, he was undoubtedly perfectly right in the main.

He came one day into the library next to his wife's room, at an unusual hour, and whilst Gertrude was taking her music lesson. He stood at the door for five minutes like the statue of the Commendatore.

His cold glassy eyes fixed on the flushed and animated countenance of his daughter, who was singing with considerable animation an Italian bravura; he then turned them on the pale but not less excited face of the young musician, who seemed to watch her lips as if "the airs of heaven were playing on her tongue" and thrilling through his soul, and then on the maid busily absorbed in her work at some distance, and without saying a word he turned on his heel and left the room unobserved by any of the three.

That evening when Mrs. Redmond, Mary, and Maurice were at tea, the maid came in and gave him a letter which had just been brought from Lifford Grange. He supposed it to be a message about some music which he was to have written for to London, and hastily opened it. Mary — who was watching him — started at the expression which suddenly overspread his face. It was the paleness of anger that blenched his cheek and made his mouth quiver.

"What is it?" she asked in an almost inaudible whisper.

"There!" he said, "take and read that. This is the sort of treatment one is exposed to in England — the only country where it would be tolerated. Oh the vulgar pride of rank, the insolence of fancied superiority!"

He dashed the note on the ground, and walked up and down the room with a scowl on his brow, and a

burning spot on his cheek. Mary picked up the paper which he had crumpled and torn, and smoothing it again, read its contents, which were as follows: —

"Mr. Lifford presents his compliments to Mr. Redmond, and begs to inform him that Miss Lifford will not continue her music lessons, and at the same time he requests him to have the goodness to send his account."

Maurice stopped opposite to Mary, and with an impatient "Well!" awaited her comments on this note. She felt embarrassed, for it did not appear to her insolent, as he called it, though ungracious it certainly was, and there was an instinct in her woman's heart which whispered the cause of this abrupt dismissal. She kept her eyes fixed on the paper for some seconds, and then said in a hesitating manner,

"It is annoying, but —"

"It is insulting!" he rejoined. "I shall send him neither answer nor account."

"Maurice, if you are so proud, how will you ever make your fortune, and how shall we realize our hopes, and provide for mother in her old age?"

He clenched his hand and cried, "I would rather die than touch his money."

She sighed and said nothing more, and two hours passed gloomily away. Then a knock was heard at the door, and the maid announced Miss Lifford. Maurice and Mary both gave a start. Mrs. Redmond, who had

been dozing in her arm-chair, rubbed her eyes and said, "Dear me, how d'ye do, my dear young lady." Gertrude shook hands with her, and she thought her hand cold and nervous, but before there was time to remark upon it, she had turned away, and was standing before Maurice. "I am come," she said, "to thank you for the lessons you have given me, and the trouble you have taken with me. You must not be shocked or annoyed at the letter that I hear my father has sent to you. There is nothing offensive to *you* in this proceeding. It is only that anything that gives me pleasure, anything that relieves the monotony of my life, and affords me interest or occupation is immediately forbidden. I suppose that my books will soon be taken away from me, and if I could be commanded not to *think*, it would doubtless be done, and my mind would become as stagnant as my existence, as dull as that hateful canal that flows under our windows. But, thank God, *that* is impossible — and I will neither be an idiot out of obedience, or ungrateful out of submission; and so I once more thank you for the instruction you have given me, for the first enjoyment I have shared with my mother, for the happy moments I have had while you played to me and talked to me of other lands which it will never be my fate to see. That is all I had to say: it is late and Jane is in a hurry. Good bye, I am glad that I was able to say this to you all."

She was gone in an instant, and Mrs. Redmond asked what it all meant. Mary explained it to her in a few words, and then turning to Maurice with some emotion said: "Now, Maurice, you cannot feel proud or angry any more — she is a dear beautiful Lady-Bird, and I wish she was not shut up in such a dull cage; it would be better for her" (and for us too, she inwardly added).

"True, my little dove," he answered, "and what would you do with her if you could?"

"Open her prison-door, and let her fly away to a happy home of her own."

He smiled, and putting a sheet of paper before her said, "Come now, make out an account for me for this Blue-Beard at Lifford Grange."

She laughed and began casting up figures, while — leaning on his hands — he sat looking at her, feeling the repose of that sweet face, and glad to find how very dear she was to him. "Twenty guineas I make it out to be!" she triumphantly exclaimed. "Indeed! What a fortune!" he answered gaily, imitating her manner; and they talked nonsense, and built castles in the air, and were as happy and as merry as possible during all the rest of the evening.

A few weeks elapsed, during which Gertrude called two or three times on Mary, once to lend her a book she had wished to read, then to return some music *which Maurice* had left at the Grange, and again to

beg for some of Mrs. Redmond's *Pot-pourri*. It was natural enough that she should find pleasure in these visits. That cottage was, in every way, a pleasant spot. Its garden was bright with autumnal flowers; there was a perfume of domestic happiness within and about it. Mrs. Redmond's gentle manner, Mary's affectionate welcome, Maurice's respectful homage were as soothing to her feelings as the fragrance of the flowers was agreeable to her senses. Then she had also an odd kind of curiosity in watching Mary and Maurice together. She had read as many novels as she could possibly lay her hand upon, and had studied them till she knew them almost by heart, but of love in real life she had never seen anything, and, concluding that these two young persons were engaged to one another, it amused her to observe how far they realized the notions she had formed of lovers.

"I believe," she said to herself one day, "that she would follow him to the end of the world, to prison and to death also, and give her life for him or burn her right hand and not wince as she did so, if it could be of use to him; but, somehow or other, her love seems to me more a religion than a passion; more of devotion in it than of fervour, rather drawn from the depths of her own heart, and freely bestowed upon him, than irresistibly attracted towards him. As to Maurice, I do not know if he is capable of loving deeply — I think he has more dependance upon her,

more selfish attachment to the happiness she creates for him than any more devoted feeling." While she was thus musing, her eyes had unconsciously fixed themselves on Maurice, and — abstracted in her own thoughts — she was not aware of it.

Mary, in a somewhat constrained voice, said to her: "You are very silent, Lady-Bird; what are you thinking of?" And Gertrude, turning to her with a smile, answered, "I believe that instead of buying my thoughts you would rather buy my silence, for I was thinking of something you always forbid me to speak about." Mary coloured, and said: "Then, indeed, Miss Lifford, I will not repeat my question." Gertrude shrugged her shoulders impatiently.

"Why will you call me Miss Lifford, when I call you Mary? It is so stiff and nonsensical."

"I think your father would be surprised if he was to hear Mary call you Gertrude," Mrs. Redmond said.

"I don't care what he thinks — his notions about *rank* are absurd. If people have been equally well educated, surely they are equals to all intents and purposes."

"No! not in every sense, dear Lady-Bird."

"That is one of those convenient answers that sound well," Gertrude rejoined, "and in reality mean nothing. In what sense are *you* not my equal, I should like to know?"

"I am not in the same worldly position as you are; I do not live in the same society."

Maurice's brow clouded over, and, hastily snatching up a newspaper, he sat down with his back to the table.

"What society *do* I live in?" Gertrude impetuously exclaimed. "I never see any one beyond the walls of Lifford Grange, except here, and at home I sometimes make the maids my companions from sheer ennui at being so much alone."

"That is a peculiarity in your case," Mary answered; "but if your father did not shun all society, you would live with people whom we should not associate with."

"Yes, my fate *is* a very peculiar one. I begin to be fully aware of that, and therefore if I should ever act in a very peculiar manner, who is to blame me? Not my father, surely?"

"You are accountable to One of still higher authority."

"Aye! but He is no respecter of persons, Mary! He does not care for quarterings and old parchments."

"But He has bid us honour our parents, and not set up our own judgment against theirs."

"Well, but answer me truly. In the sight of God are we not all," and she glanced round the room, "perfectly equal?"

"I should think not," Mary said with a smile, as

she glanced at her deaf patient mother, intently busy over Maurice's shirt, which she was mending.

"Ay! you may be right there," Gertrude quickly rejoined, "but then grant at least that if there is superiority amongst us, it is not with me it lies. Your mother is my superior; so are you! — Do not dispute it. Let it be for argument's sake, and my point is established."

"The blacksmith may be your superior in one sense, for aught you know; and yet I suppose you will hardly consider him as altogether your equal?"

"Indeed I should, if instead of being coarse, vulgar and ignorant, he was good-looking, clever, and better informed than myself. If I saw him employ every moment not engaged by his labours in cultivating his mind, and improving the talents that Heaven had bestowed upon him, if his sentiments were refined, and his character elevated, can you imagine for a moment that I should not think that man my equal — nay, my superior, and feel humbled to the dust in comparing his greatness and my littleness?"

Her features were glowing with enthusiasm, and she spoke so loud, that Mrs. Redmond looked up from her work with an inquiring smile, and seemed a little anxious when she saw Gertrude's flushed cheek and Mary's grave countenance. The latter answered calmly: —

"*You would* be quite right in admiring such a

man, and in considering him as your superior in all essential respects; but all this would not make him your equal in a social point of view, or break down the barrier which a difference of rank would place between you."

"I hate and despise conventionalities," Gertrude replied, "and especially cant, which is the worse form of conventionality. I am tired of hearing what should be, and want to hear of what *is*."

"I will tell you, dear Lady-Bird, what invariably *is* the case when women begin to talk of hating and despising what others respect. The love of independence is the first step towards evil —" "Or towards virtue and happiness," Maurice murmured in a low voice, "and *not* the virtue of mere habit — not a common-place happiness."

The colour in Mary's cheek now rivalled that in Gertrude's, and she fixed her calm clear eyes steadily upon her, which seemed to make her uneasy; but proudly throwing back her head, she exclaimed: —

"I am not ashamed of anything I say!"

"And not of anything you *do?*" Mary said in a very low whisper — so low that no one else heard it but her to whom it was addressed — and then bent her eyes on the work she was employed upon. Gertrude moved hastily away, and sitting down by Mrs. Redmond, she took up a faded Cape jessamine that was lying on the table, and said to her,

"I am sure this comes from Woodlands! Does it not?"

"Yes, Miss Apley gave it me yesterday, when I went to her about the geranium cuttings she wanted from our little garden. She was speaking of you, Miss Lifford!"

"Was she?" Gertrude exclaimed with sudden animation; "what did she say about me?"

"It was in talking of this great breakfast that is going to take place there; a ball, I believe, and a concert, all in one, for Mr. Apley's coming of age. Maurice is going to play there, at least they want him to do so; all sorts of great London performers and singers are to be there, and company from a great distance." (Maurice at this moment left the room, and threw himself on the bench in the garden.) "Miss Apley was saying how much she admired you: that it was quite a pleasure to them all to meet you in their drives, and that they had so long been wishing to make your acquaintance. She asked me if you were out. I said that you were grown up, but had not yet been presented, I thought."

"No, indeed; and if I do not some day present myself to the world, I do not suppose that any one else will do it for me!"

"Miss Apley said that they had sent an invitation to the Grange, and they did so hope you would

be allowed to come, but were sadly afraid it would be refused."

"It will be refused," Gertrude gloomily ejaculated; and her eyes — so bright a moment before — were suddenly overcast like a summer sky by a thunder-cloud.

"She said that if you had any friends in the neighbourhood you would like to go with, they would ask them directly."

"I have no friends," Gertrude said in the same gloomy manner. "I know nobody — nobody but you."

Maurice came and leant against the window, and hastily gathering a nosegay of jessamine and roses, he held it out to her. She took it, and smelt at it in an absent listless manner, and soon went away. As she walked through the garden with her maid, who had been waiting for her at the gate, she unconsciously dropped it. He picked it up and pulled it to pieces. Mrs. Redmond said to her daughter, "There is an orphan-like look about that young creature, though she has a father and mother." Maurice came in and practised some difficult passages, playing with great brilliancy and effect.

"You must play that at Woodlands," Mary said, when he had finished some variations on a beautiful air of Mendelssohn's.

"Oh, I can play in that way to you, my little Mary, but there —"

"What! Has the English air turned you shy, Maurice — you who have been so used to public performances — who have played in Italy before artists and fine ladies?"

"I suppose it is English air, and English coldness that makes me faint-hearted. It is so seldom that an English audience show any pleasure or feeling, especially at a private concert; and weak applause paralyzes the spirit and the fingers."

"But you will win fame, Maurice dear!" the widow ejaculated.

"Fame is a big word, mother," he answered, with a half smile.

"Praise," Mary said, "the forerunner of Fame."

"Cleverly said, little Mary! but I will own to you that there is one sort of praise than which hisses would be more acceptable. You are conscious, perhaps, of having played very ill, and these people come up to you with a smile on their faces, and exclaim, 'Oh, how beautiful that was! What a charming thing! You never played so well in your life!' and you wax sick, or wroth with their nonsense. And worse still than that, perhaps you have played well, and *that* you also know — by the throbbing head, the aching nerves, the icy hands which bear witness to it, — you have poured out your soul in an

improvisation, and then somebody asks you for that pretty thing over again! They might as well encore a flash of lightning, or cry 'Bis' at the fall of an avalanche."

"You must forget these troublesome people, and think only of those whose hearts beat in unison with yours," and she laid her head on the pianoforte, in an attitude that pleased his eye and amused his fancy.

He stroked her fair hair and said, "You are my good genius — no, that is not the word, my good angel rather. How is it that you always understand me?"

"I have an echo *here*," she said, with her hand on her heart, "which responds to what you feel. Do you remember how fond we were as children of the echo in the ruins of the abbey, and how we used to make it repeat, word after word, our favourite verses?"

"Yes, I do; but how vexed we were, also, when noisy children or fine ladies came there, and made our dear echo repeat harsh sounds or silly words. So in the world, the folly and the heartlessness of others disturb the harmony you speak of."

"I should have thought it would only have deepened it," she said.

"The truth is, Mary, that you do not quite know what an artist is, and on what kind of stimulus he lives. You are always talking of genius as of something very holy, very exalted, very pure, and you seem

to forget in what a rank soil it often thrives, and how little of a religious spirit has accompanied some of its highest manifestations. It is a fire, but not always from Heaven."

"Oh, yes! from Heaven!" she exclaimed with fervour, "surely from Heaven it comes, pure, bright, and undefiled; like all that God creates, it is good; and, like all that man misuses, dangerous. The flame that burns amidst foulness and corruption does not lose its purity, and genius, inhabiting a mean and vicious soul, is a spark of heavenly fire shining through the mist of human depravity."

"Then genius may atone for moral perversity?"

"Oh, no! for what sin, what disgrace can be greater than to use for vile purposes so glorious a gift of God — to drag through the mire what was meant to raise us to Heaven!"

"Why, Mary, you surprise me! Have you, after all, a poet's spirit within you?"

"No, indeed," she answered, "it is only the echo I was speaking of just now. I cannot say things of this sort out of my own head, but I remember what you say and what you read to me, and, like the bird in the fable, make myself smart with borrowed feathers."

"No, indeed, Mary darling," her mother called out, "I am sure you are not like a bird in a fable.

You always were a good child — is it not true, Maurice?"

"She is, indeed," he answered; "and the only bird she is like is a true dove, a messenger of peace, the type of heaven's love. And now let us think of this fête at Woodlands. You are to go there with me, Mary — Miss Apley said so. How shall you be dressed?"

"I have not thought of that yet. I suppose that I shall put on my white muslin gown, and the blue and white chain that you brought me from Venice, and I am afraid I must buy a new ribbon for my bonnet, and perhaps a new shawl. It is very expensive indeed, to be an artist's —" She hesitated, and he said, "An artist's bride?" She shook her head and laughed.

"How will Lady-Bird be dressed?" he asked.

"I don't know indeed, but I am afraid she will not go."

"O but I hope she will — it will make a great difference to you if she does."

"I hope so, too; for it would be a very good thing for her to become acquainted with persons in her own rank of life."

"She does not care for all that — she has no mean prejudices, and never uses cant phrases. She is as guileless as a child —"

"O Maurice, do you think she is so perfectly artless as that?"

"*You* do not, I see. Ah, Mary, what woman was ever a true friend to another? I should have thought you might have been an exception to the rule, but it is always the same, I suppose; a woman never likes to hear her best friend praised."

Mary had a little struggle with herself, and then said: "I think she has very fine qualities, and it is impossible not to admire, to pity —"

"And to love her," he quickly added, "and the fewer friends she has, the more we ought to cling to her. To love her only next to what we love best. You will love her next to me, and I will love her next to you."

"Indeed, Maurice, we must not look forward to that, or expect that our intimacy will continue; we cannot be of use to *her*, and she may do us harm."

"What nonsense that is, and how selfish, too! I never should have suspected you of such narrow-minded folly."

He turned away with an expression of deep annoyance, and did not recover his tranquillity for some time. It was the first time since his return that he had spoken harshly to Mary. Perhaps she had been unwise in what she had said, and she reproached herself for it as for a fault; but she had seen a rising cloud in the horizon, which threatened his peace as

well as her own, and for one instant had betrayed what it would have been more prudent to conceal. She did penance for it with secret tears and aching reviewals of every word that she had uttered. He did no penance, he shed no tears, he questioned not his heart; but when she received him with a smile, and made his breakfast for him as usual the next morning, and showed no consciousness of offence, he was perfectly satisfied, and thought how comfortable it would be to have such a sweet-tempered wife.

CHAPTER VII.

"Et de ma vie obscure, hélas! qu'aurais-je à dire?
Elle fut — ce qu'elle est pour tout ce qui respire —
Sur les mers de ce monde il n'est jamais de port,
Et le naufrage seul nous jette sur le bord!
Jeune encore j'ai sondé ces ténèbres profondes,
La vie est un degré de l'échelle des mondes,
Que nous devons franchir pour arriver ailleurs."

LAMARTINE.

"But what are these grave thoughts to thee?
For restlessly, impatiently
Thou strivest, strugglest to be free.
Thy only dream is liberty,
Thou carest little how or where."

LONGFELLOW.

GERTRUDE stood at her window on one of those drizzling melancholy mornings that impart a degree of gloom even to the most cheerful landscape; and never had the scene she looked upon appeared so utterly uninviting to her eyes. An English park — beautiful as it often is — does not always present a very exhilarating appearance. The large solitary trees with their sweeping branches and wide-spread shade, the green secluded glades, the absence of any token of human life, the timid herds of deer gliding about amongst the fern and through the distant vistas like graceful and noiseless apparitions, have a peculiar charm of their own, but it is more akin to a pleasing melancholy than to anything like gaiety.

The musing philosophy of Jaques would seem the natural frame of mind which the sylvan and majestic scenery of an English park would inspire; but there was neither beauty nor dignity attached to the flat stateliness of such a park as that of Lifford Grange. Avenues of *not* fine trees, clumps of small ugly ones, the flat unbroken extent on every side, the canal-looking river creeping sullenly through it, stamped the whole scene with indescribable gloom, and, seen through the medium of fog and rain, would have presented a cheerless aspect to eyes more favourably inclined towards it than Gertrude's.

If the view had seemed to her ugly from her bedroom window it seemed uglier still from the breakfast-room, where she waited for the appearance of her father and of his uncle — her usual companions at that meal. She looked at the tall windows with a sort of aversion, at the family pictures with resentment, at the two sofas facing one another on each side of the chimney as if they had been her enemies, and at the huge clock which recorded the passage of so many uninteresting hours as if it had done her an injury. "I had much rather go into a convent at once," she mentally exclaimed, "than spend my life in this way. I wish Father Lifford would not laugh at me when I talk of it. La Trappe itself would be gay compared to this place."

At that moment the said Father came into the room

with his snuff-box in his hand, his stiff hair — half black and half grey — bristling fiercely round his head, and the lines in his forehead more indented than ever. His slouching gait, his heavy figure, and ill-made cassock made him appear older than he really was. The keen expression of his eyes and the strength of his frame often surprised those who would have deemed him at first sight a feeble old man. There was not apparently any love lost (to use a common expression) between him and Gertrude. If there was any reciprocal affection it certainly did not appear on the surface of their intercourse. He was devotedly attached to her mother, whom he had known in Spain from the days of her childhood. To her he was always perfectly kind and gentle; but towards others his temper — without being bad — was stiff, and his modes of judging and of dealing with people naturally severe. Between him and his nephew there was a strange mutual forbearance, and an odd kind of regard. That he must have secretly disapproved and lamented his indifference to religion, his want of practical charity to the poor, his omission of many duties and merely decent observance of others, none could have doubted who were acquainted with his own fervent piety, his untiring devotion to the spiritual and temporal welfare of his neighbours, and — under a rough exterior — the real kindness of his heart; but, however much or little he might at any time have remonstrated with him in private, he never showed

his disapprobation at other times, or spoke of him and of his faults to others. On his children he inculcated a profound respect for their father, and as his notions of passive obedience were strict, he was always much annoyed at Gertrude's independent turn of mind, and at her untameable determination to have her own opinion, at least — if she could not have her own way — on every subject.

He did not attempt to exercise any direct authority over her; "he was neither her father nor her tutor," he said, and did not wish to interfere with what was the business of her parents. As her confessor and spiritual guide, his province was distinct; and though his natural austerity inclined him, perhaps, to exhibit to her more of the stern than of the attractive aspect of religion, — its restraints rather than its joys, — there was greater kindness and indulgence on his part, and respect and submission on hers than would have been easily imagined by those who witnessed the general tenor of their intercourse at other times, when he freely and sarcastically commented on her conduct, and she was barely restrained by a sense of duty from returning flippant answers to his remarks. It belonged to her character to be in awe of him there where he was always just and gentle, whereas she set him at defiance when he was, or appeared to her, harsh and despotic.

On the morning in question he stood before the

chimney, warming his hands at the fire, and turning round occasionally to look at Gertrude, who was impatiently knocking two spoons together, and now and then pushing back her chair an inch or two from the table, and then back again towards it with a brusquerie that made the cups rattle and the urn tremble. "How late my father is this morning!" she exclaimed at last; "it makes one lose half the day, to be kept waiting in this manner."

"What a loss to the world one of your half days must be!" remarked Father Lifford, looking at her full in the face from under his bushy grey eyebrows.

"Not to the world, perhaps, but to myself," she answered, in a voice of suppressed indignation.

"Why now, how would you have employed the last half-hour had you breakfasted at the usual time?"

"In reading, I suppose."

"Hum — in reading! Oh, very good. In reading what?"

"My French books," she quickly replied.

It happened that Father Lifford had an inveterate dislike to French literature, and the sight of Molière's plays, which Gertrude was everlastingly poring over, tried his patience sorely.

"Your French books! — ay, it is a pity, indeed, that you have not had time to study this morning "Les Fourberies de Scapin," the last thing I saw you reading. Excellent moral lessons you must draw from your

studies, and great profit you derive from them, doubtless."

Gertrude coloured, bit her lip, and looked as if she would have liked to make a violent answer; but she only abruptly got up and walked to the window, where she rapidly played with her fingers on the glass, as if beating time to her agitated thoughts.

"What weather!" she ejaculated, after a few moments' silence; "what torrents of rain! It looks more like the end of November than the beginning of September. How *can* mamma keep up her spirits on such a day as this? — always nailed to her couch, — always looking on that one view. I wonder she does not turn to stone."

"Do you, indeed? Much you understand about that. Take care you do not get hardened quite in another way."

"O, as to being hardened, I feel myself stiffening every day. I shall soon be a sort of moving statue. Are *you* not sometimes afraid of being petrified here?"

He shrugged his shoulders, and betook himself to the newspaper. Mr. Lifford walked into the room a few minutes afterwards, and Gertrude poured out tea and interchanged a few words with him, such as pass between people who must speak to one another for form's sake, but who have not a single thought or interest in common. When breakfast was finished, Mr. Lifford got up, and assembling together the letters and

newspapers which lay on the table, took a large card from among them, and pointing to it, said, "You must write an excuse in answer to that, Gertrude. I told you what to say the last time they sent one; you have only to repeat the same thing now."

Gertrude looked at the card and saw it was the invitation that Mrs. Redmond had spoken of. She took it up, and her strong wish on the subject overcoming not so much her timidity as her reluctance to express such a wish to her father, she looked him in the face and said, "I should like very much to go to this breakfast, I wish very much to accept this invitation — pray let me go." He seemed surprised, and hardly prepared for such a request. Not that he had the least thought of granting it, but he had never thought of a *reason* to give on the subject, and he only said, "Are you joking?" There was so little that looked like a joke in Gertrude's face or in his, that the question seemed unnecessary. "No, I am asking you a favour," she replied, but there was not anything supplicating in her manner. "Did you think of going *alone?*" he coldly inquired. She made no answer, and he added, "You must know that it is out of the question," and he left the room. She remained for a moment standing near the chimney with the card in her hand. As if speaking to herself she said,

"I will ask mamma about it."

"Your mother is very suffering to-day," Father

Lifford observed, "you had better not trouble her about such a thing."

"Very well, I will not, but will *you* do so when she is better."

"I! — why should I? What is this all about?"

"It is about my going to this breakfast at Woodlands, and I assure you that it would be a good work, if you could help me about it."

"A good work to get you to a ball! Is the child mad?"

"No, she is not mad — but she may go mad, if people don't take care. She is tired to death of —"

"Of herself, I suppose," he interrupted, "and no wonder."

"Do you think my life amusing?"

"Were you sent into the world on purpose to amuse yourself?"

"Certainly not, as far as I can see. Don't be angry with me, Father Lifford, do you know that for once I do not want to quarrel with you?"

"That is extraordinary. What has caused this change?"

"Why, sometimes I get a little frightened about myself. I am afraid of getting to hate everybody."

"It is on your knees you should get rid of that feeling, my child."

"I think I had better be a nun, Father."

"What? *you* a nun! Alas for the convent that received you!"

"What is that other card there near the sugar-basin?"

"This? — It is the same piece of nonsense as the other. These good foolish people have invited *me*."

"How civil they are; O how I wish we were all more like other people."

"Like what people?"

"I will not tell you, you would be shocked."

"You are not generally afraid of shocking me."

"But what I mean to say is this. Mamma is so good that *she* is not like other people."

"Do you wish she were less good?"

"No, but I wish she were not always ill and in pain." He sighed and said in a low voice, "It is God's will."

"But it is not His will that papa should be so proud, and so harsh."

"How dare you speak in that way of your father? You deserve to be treated harshly, you are a rebellious and undutiful child."

"There is an end of it! Always met with that. Always told that I am wrong and others right. Well — this cannot last for ever. Some day or other I must take my own fate in my own hands, and then —" This was said to herself, but even mentally she did not finish her sentence but hurried away to her

usual refuge, a large deserted library, which she called her den.

It was a lofty room in bad repair; cobwebs lay undisturbed against the angles of the ceiling, and the panels of the door; dead flies and torpid butterflies were strewn on the broad window-seats, two immense globes stood between the windows, and books covered with dust lined the shelves of the tarnished gold and white bookcases; a gigantic map of the county hung over the chimney. It was a dull desolate-looking room, but yet Gertrude liked it, and had spent in it some of the pleasantest hours of her life. There were neither chairs nor tables in it, but plenty of space and light. She could walk there with that rapid pace which relieves the mind when over-excited. She could take down a volume from the aforesaid bookcase, and sit for hours on one of the window-seats, alternately reading and gazing on the sky and the careering clouds; or watching with interest the struggles of a fly in some spider's web, or the resuscitation of a paralysed moth, on which a ray of sunshine might have accidentally fallen.

They are strange things — those long solitary hours in early youth — nothing like them exists later in life. There is such ceaseless thought about self, with such small self-knowledge; such intense thinking, with so little reflection; such abstraction of mind, with such sensibility to outward impressions; such world-

liness in the visions which the mind frames for itself, such utter disinterestedness in the sacrifices it contemplates. Time is wasted with spendthrift prodigality; hopes erected on the most flimsy foundations; and in the magic glass in which these imaginary shapes are reflected, everything assumes a form and a colouring widely differing from reality.

There was a store of unemployed energy in Gertrude's character which should have spent itself in action. Unfortunately, her present duties were all of a passive nature. No labour or exertions were called forth, only the silent endurance of privation. Father Lifford had once attempted to make her visit the poor, and teach in the school which he had established, and she had entered on these occupations with eagerness and delight. They were beginning to tell beneficially on her character, when, suddenly, on some frivolous pretext of a fever in the neighbourhood but really from a wayward and inconsistent exercise of power, her father interfered, and desired that she should no more visit the school and the cottages, though he neither knew nor cared that she wandered about the lanes, and in and out of Stonehouseleigh, only accompanied by her maid. Father Lifford told her, indeed, that there was more merit in obedience than in exertion, — in sacrifice than in labour; but the vent which would have been afforded for the flame which was smouldering under a heavy load of ennui was thus at once

stopped up, and Gertrude fell back on her own thoughts, her desultory reading, and her dangerous habit of dreaming life away. She spent it in repinings at her fate, and murmurs against her father. These feelings fermented, as it were, in her heart during solitary hours, and when she appeared at meals, there was a dark resentful expression in her eyes, and a heavy cloud on her brow. The next day her mother sent for her. She was better than usual. The weather had changed, a south-westerly wind was breathing its sweet influence over the face of Nature, and through the open window there came a smell of flowers. The couch of the invalid had been moved near to that window, and — propped up by pillows — she lay with closed eyes and hands joined together, enjoying the perfumed air that played on her pale cheek. She did not hear her daughter come in, and remained motionless and abstracted, while Gertrude took a low stool, and placing it between the couch and the window, sat down with her face buried in her hands, and feeling the singular repose of that scene operating strangely on her mind. Not that it soothed her: on the contrary, she felt excited; but for the first time began to wonder over her mother's fate, and to ask herself if she had ever had any of the thoughts that worked in her own brain, — any of the feelings that stirred her own heart so often.

She raised her head and gazed on that mother's face, and for the first time saw that it was beautiful,

and like her own. And she knew her own was so — too well she knew it. She thought, as if it were for the first time, that she was that mother's child, — that the same blood ran in their veins — that their features were formed in the same mould. Were their hearts so unlike? — were their minds so dissimilar? — had the iron hand of suffering crushed the power of emotion where once it might have existed? — or were other hearts unlike her own? — had her mother never felt a wish beyond that couch, to which since she could first remember her she had been nailed? — had her eyes never sparkled with anger or with joy, or her lips never uttered any but the short broken sentences that fell from them now? "O mother, mother, were you ever young, ever thoughtless, ever rebellious like me? — had you ever longings for earth's happiness as you now have for Heaven's bliss."

These words were uttered in the faintest whisper, but the last words reached Mrs. Lifford's ear, and she opened her eyes and smiled, which was a rare thing for her to do. "Heaven!" she said slowly, "Heaven is a long time coming." Then rousing herself as from a dream, she put out her hand, and made Gertrude a sign to come nearer to her. She gazed on her face, and it seemed as if she also was reading new things in her child's countenance and was startled at what she saw there, for she looked at her with a kind of anxious questioning expression. Gertrude turned away

and said, "You are much better to-day, Mamma; I never saw you look so well, — you have quite a colour." Her mother smiled mournfully; she felt the red spots glowing in her cheek, and knew that they were burning with disease, not with health. But increasing fever gave her more strength than usual, and for once she seemed inclined to speak, but was so unused to hold any conversation with her daughter beyond a few words of endearment, that she did nothing but press her hand and call her names of fondness in Spanish, — till, suddenly rousing herself, and leaning on her elbow, she said, "Gertrude, you are very happy, I hope?"

Gertrude grew crimson, hid her face in her hands, and hot tears came struggling through her fingers. Now was the moment to speak and enlist her mother on her side, but there was that in her nature which made her prone to resist and slow to complain. However, after an instant's struggle with herself she said, "Mamma, I remember that twelve years ago I had such a wish for a wax-doll, that I lay awake at nights thinking of it, and cried whenever I passed the shop where it stood. But I would not ask to have it, from a proud angry feeling that no one had ever thought of making me a present of a doll. I told Father Lifford of this feeling of anger, and he bade me go directly to you and ask for the doll. I did not like to do so, but was obliged to obey. Just now I felt vexed

that you could ask if I was happy, and I could not bear to speak and say that I am not. But I will speak the truth — I am not at all happy."

"No!" ejaculated the mother, "not happy with youth and health, and life before thee? O my child, that I could teach thee to be happy!" After a pause she added with touching earnestness, and with her hand on her forehead, "But there is so much confusion there — here in my heart I feel it all. God knows what I would say — O my God, teach my child what is happiness." Again she paused, and then with a faint smile said, "What would make thee happy, Gertrude? — Not a wax-doll now?" Gertrude put her mouth close to her mother's ear, as if afraid of being overheard, and whispered, "To go to the breakfast at Woodlands would make me happy; I have set my heart upon it, as much as ever I did as a child on a wax-doll." Mrs. Lifford looked surprised and puzzled; she held her temples in her hands as if collecting her thoughts.

"A breakfast, darling! But who could take thee there? My Gertrude, it is impossible."

"Mamma, they have asked Father Lifford — persuade *him* to go and to take me." The boldness of this scheme struck her mother silent with astonishment: she shook her head, but Gertrude went on,

"Mamma, I *must* have some change — some amuse-

ment. I cannot bear the life I lead any longer; I am sure that papa hates me."

"O child, child, down upon thy knees, and ask to be forgiven for such a thought! *Pray*, *pray*, there is no safety against such thoughts except in prayer. But what has thy father done to thee? How dreadful!" She made the sign of the cross on her daughter's forehead, and sighed deeply.

"Do not look so frightened, Mamma. I did not say I hated him. O Heaven forbid! and perhaps I am wrong, and he does not hate me; but that he does not care for me is certain — nobody does but you, Mamma — you do, perhaps. I have not always thought so, but somehow or other I have felt to-day as if you did."

"Hast thou then really supposed that thy mother? .... O my long and bitter sufferings, my palsied limbs, my dim and confused memory, my faltering tongue, have you indeed done this? It was just, — it was right; but now I thank thee, O my God, that the veil has been lifted, — that she has had a glimpse into the heart that beats under the load that it must bear, aye, and loves to bear!" she exclaimed with increasing energy, and talking in Spanish, which she always did when strongly excited. She fell back exhausted, and a paroxysm of pain ensuing, Gertrude was obliged to call the maid who usually attended her mother, and to leave her to her care.

The next day Mrs. Lifford was somewhat better

again, but she did not send for her daughter. She employed that interval of ease in two conversations, the first of which was with Father Lifford. When he sat down by her couch, and was preparing as usual to read to her out of a Spanish book of devotion, she put her hand on his arm and said, "I have something to say to you, Father." He removed his spectacles, took a pinch of snuff, and put himself in a listening attitude. "There is something I have to ask you, that I have some hope that you will do for me, even though you may dislike it very much." He looked up quickly, and she continued, "I am anxious about Gertrude."

"So am I," he gruffly ejaculated.

"She is not happy. The life she leads is a dull one for a young girl — you know it is, Father," she added earnestly, as he knit his brows and shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't say it is gay, but what's the use of talking. There is nothing to be done. It will be better, I suppose, when Edgar comes home."

"She has set her heart upon going to this fête, this breakfast at Woodlands. That young heart of hers will overflow with bitterness, if she is always refused every amusement, every pleasure which her imagination paints to her in glowing colours, and mine aches, dear Father, when I think of my helpless state, — my utter incapacity —"

"Come, come; don't complain. You have borne

your sufferings well hitherto. Do not let this foolish girl's fancies make you repine at God's will."

"Heaven forbid that I should murmur! But when I am able to think, — when an interval in my sufferings gives me time for reflection, then I become anxious about the future character, and the probable fate of my child, and I tremble as I muse on it. Authority will do nothing with her; coldness and indifference still less: her heart must be softened — worked upon — and won, — and *you* must do this."

"I must do it! — A right proper instrument you have fixed upon, indeed, for the purpose; a cross and crabbed old man like me!"

"O Father, Father, belie not your own heart."

"Don't talk to me of my heart. I have a conscience, I hope, and a soul to save, — but a heart that is to win hearts, phoo, phoo, that is all nonsense! Send for the child yourself — give her now and then a mother's kiss, and leave me to teach her her duty, — that is my business, and I *will* attend to it."

"Are you going to refuse me the first favour I have ever asked of you?"

"But in the name of patience what is it?"

"Something that you will at first protest you will never do; that you will think ridiculous, and even wrong, perhaps —"

"You are going to ask me to do something wrong! What has come over you?"

"It may *seem* wrong at first sight; but depend upon it, dear Father, there may be more merit in it than in your noblest actions, — in your greatest austerities."

"I don't know what you mean by austerities — I never do noble actions. I don't know what you are talking about. I never knew you so foolish before!"

"Listen to me, I entreat you, and do not be too much startled. You must go to this breakfast at Woodlands, and take Gertrude there."

"O now I must send for the doctor. You had better ring for a composing draught, my dear child. You are not yourself."

"I never was so much myself; my thoughts and my mind are clearer than usual. I have reflected deeply; something must be done to change the current of that child's feelings, — to soften her heart, — to make her see that we understand her."

"It is very easy to understand her. She is a headstrong girl, who has set her foolish heart on a piece of worldly dissipation and vanity, and you are a foolish mother, bent on indulging her."

"Father, you *know* me, — you know where, with all its faults, its weakness, its past infidelities, its present unfaithfulness to grace, — you know where my heart, and its hopes and its affections are set. *He* whom I should have loved alone, — He who had

claimed me from my infancy, and whose consecrated spouse I should have been, — He whom I forsook in an instant of infatuation, but who mercifully appointed me a fate which has been a continual safeguard from the world I had rashly sought, and a school in which to learn the lesson he assigns me, — *He* knows that could I place my child in His everlasting arms at once and for ever, safe upon earth and on her way to Heaven, my soul would be at peace. Or if that high vocation was denied, could I see her useful and contented in a home of her own, no worldly pleasures or advantages would I covet for her. I care not that the eyes of men should look on her rare beauty, that jewels should gleam on her brow, or her eyes win the love and admiration of crowds. I want no riches for her — no greatness — no splendour, but peace of heart and gentleness of spirit, — the love of God, and of man."

"And is this — what do you call this thing? — this breakfast at Woodlands to bring her to this blessed state of mind?"

"You must think me absurd; but *have* patience with me, — bear with me, I am so helpless — so weak; but I have thought much about this, — I have asked myself if to send her for once into a new and exciting scene, which might make her home appear to her even more dull than before, and increase her desire to visit such again, was either wise or prudent,

and the answer my conscience has given me is this: — 'Did she not long for the pleasures which have hitherto been denied her? Did not she picture to herself in glowing colours the enjoyments she is debarred from?' Heaven forbid that I should thrust them upon her! But I know that she *does* long for them, and that her spirit rebels against the forced seclusion of her life. The light of worldly amusements cannot be so injurious to a young mind, as the exaggerated pictures which it dreams of them. We *cannot* make her existence agreeable at home, you know it but too well. Sickness and suffering are bad companions for a child, and though God in his boundless mercy has opened to me sources of bliss which make me sometimes exclaim in the words of a French writer, "*Je souffre à en mourir, et cependant ma vie est un Paradis anticipé,*" I cannot expect that young heart at once to understand what the experience of life — and a life of singular trials — has by slow degrees led me to feel."

Mrs. Lifford threw herself back on her pillow exhausted, but soon rousing herself again, continued: "If I obtain for Gertrude the fulfilment of her wish, she will see a mark of affection in this effort; but she does not know what it costs me, for I must obtain it from one — O Father, not yet entirely subdued is this proud heart of mine. It is so painful to ask *him* anything!"

"Like mother, like child," the old man gravely said.

"O do not say that — do not say that!" she cried. "Let me not think that she too will have to pass through a fiery trial on her way to peace and joy. That grace must force its way into *her* heart through the breach anguish opens, and over the scattered ruins of every earthly affection. But you will grant my prayer — you will go to Woodlands."

Father Lifford moved uneasily in his chair, again took snuff, and then — like a man who brings out his words under the influence of the rack or the thumbscrew — he said, "My dear child, I am not come to my present age, or have read good books all my life, without learning that to do what one hates is better than to please one's self. I also know that a good sort of woman like you may better understand foolish young girls than an old man like me; so that, for aught I know, you may be right and I may be wrong. I also hope that I have no fear of ridicule, and if you like to expose yourself to it by sending a young lady into the world in the charge of an old priest, it may be a wholesome mortification for the young lady and for the old priest: so you may please yourself about it. If her father gives his permission, I will drive to this place with your daughter. I will sit like an old bear in a corner of the grounds; and when she has

derived from the entertainment all the benefits you anticipate, or when it comes to a natural end — which I presume such things do — I will bring her home again; but only be prepared for the impression it will create that the girl's parents are fools, and the old man a greater fool than them: but, as I said before, I don't care — it will be as good a mortification as any other."

"I know that it will be a mortification to you; but as to its being ridiculous I cannot agree with you. You are Mr. Lifford's uncle — Gertrude's nearest relation. There is nothing unbecoming in an ecclesiastic going occasionally into society, and who would watch over my child with so paternal an eye?"

"Tush, tush! Don't talk to me of paternal eyes, or any of that nonsense. I shall not watch her at all. I will see she gets there — and if I can, that she comes back; but nothing else will I undertake — and this, remember, I will only do once."

"She will make acquaintances, and may have hereafter opportunities of going out with others."

"Much good it will do her," he murmured between his teeth.

"You *do* see something true in what I have said?"

"I see you mean well, and I am not sure enough that you are wrong to oppose you; it may be for the best, and so let nothing more be said about it. It's

of no use to hold under a man's nose the physic he is to take."

Late that day, when Mr. Lifford paid his accustomed visit to his wife, instead of the few commonplace sentences which were habitually exchanged between them, a scene took place such as had not occurred for years. The pent-up sufferings of a woman's heart found vent in that hour. Strange, that the question of a girl's going to a breakfast or not should have called up the expression of a sorrow, of a passionate emotion, of something bordering on resentment, which had remained silent for years. Mrs. Lifford, soon after her marriage, had understood her fate, and quietly accepted it — at times almost rejoiced in it. She had done violence to her conscience by marrying. Her will had first been over-ruled by that of her relations. The heart, which had clearly recognised its vocation to a different and higher destiny, had — half in weakness, half under a transient impression wrought on her fancy — surrendered itself to an earthly love; and when, after a few months of something which she supposed must be happiness — but scarcely felt to be so — she suddenly awoke to the conviction of her husband's utter indifference, and accidentally discovered that the little affection his nature was susceptible of had been previously expended on another, that it was out of vanity alone that he had

married her, that the memory of his first love occupied the only spot in his heart which was open to anything like feeling, and that indifference to herself was gradually changing into aversion — she experienced a strange sensation, in which something like satisfaction was combined with grief and shame. Perhaps it had a kind of affinity with the sort of relief which a criminal feels when his guilt is discovered, and the necessity for concealment is at an end. She had not gained the earthly happiness she had sought by doing violence to her convictions, and it was a kind of relief to her to find the hand of God upon her still, even in the form of chastisement. When its weight grew heavier, and pain and solitude became her portion, still more distinctly did this feeling rise in her mind. Hers was no common destiny, and no common love had ordained it. Deep, fervent, intense expressions of gratitude had been poured forth from that lonely couch during long vigils of pain, and days of incessant suffering, for a fate which had in some sense restored to her the vocation she had lost; but in a woman's heart — although grace may master, sway, rule, and direct it, though it opens to her a world of bliss which throws human happiness at an immeasurable distance — there remains (except in the case of saints) something of infirmity, something of self-pity, something which is neither a wish nor a

regret, but which looks like them at moments, and would appear so to those who do not readily comprehend the mysteries of the human heart.

And so it was in that hour; that pale dying woman (for dying she was, although months and even years might yet elapse before her death) could look upon the cold, handsome, unexpressive face of her husband, and think how he had slighted, neglected, and injured her, and not feel one touch of resentment or of regret, — day after day she had done so. It was her daily meditation, after his short formal visits to her, how wonderful God's ways had been with her, how by His divine art He had turned the transient joys she had snatched at into pangs, which had proved so many stepping-stones from the earth which they obscured to the Heaven which they disclosed. But this day, when she endeavoured to find the way to his heart in behalf of her daughter and found its avenues impenetrably closed, — when in answer to her pleadings for a permission, which was all she wanted, that Gertrude should occasionally have some little change and variety in her life, and, in particular, that he would allow the carriage to take her and Father Lifford to Woodlands on the day of the breakfast, he returned a short negative, and even sneered at the consent which his uncle had given to the mother's request, then that mother did not look at him calmly. There was no anger in her face, but an in-

tense feeling of some kind. With her hands clasped and her cheeks burning with excitement she reiterated her request. When he turned away as if weary of the subject, and prepared to leave the room, she spoke to him with a voice and in a manner that obliged him to turn back and to listen. What she *said* cannot easily be written; what she *felt* not many could understand. That she gained her point some might wonder at, who do not know what an unexpected burst of passionate emotion can effect on the coldest and hardest hearts, when it takes them by surprise. Her sentences were broken, her words strange and abrupt, her countenance somewhat wild; for such excitement was too powerful for so feeble a frame. When her husband — half afraid, perhaps, of making her dangerously ill by opposition, disturbed if not touched by her allusions to the past, with not enough affection for his daughter to make him consider the subject as it concerned her welfare — gave the desired permission as he would have ungraciously granted a holiday to his groom, she sighed deeply, and when the door was shut upon him, turned her face towards the wall and wept bitterly.

How little persons know, and especially young persons, of the trials of others! How they will exact, and then not appreciate what has, perhaps, been effected at an amount of anxiety and of pain which they do not dream of. Balzac, in his powerful tale "Eugenie Grandet," shows one the struggles, the anxieties,

the art, the passionate solicitude with which the miser's daughter procures the few little common-place comforts with which she supplies the orphan cousin, who has come to reside under her father's roof, — the spoilt and now forsaken child of fortune, who uses without noticing, or squanders without enjoying what she has purchased or begged in fear and trembling, what she has obtained at the price of scenes which have made her heart quail and her cheek blanch. And the picture is true to the life; every day it is exemplified in domestic life. Secret acts of heroism are performed which look so easy and common-place, that no one would guess the secret prayers, the previous struggles, the amount of resolution they have required; and they pass by without comment and without praise.

When Mrs. Lifford told her daughter that she was to go to the Woodlands' breakfast, the girl's eyes sparkled with delight, and she fondly kissed her mother; but if she had guessed what that mother had suffered the day before to open to her that prospect of amusement, there would doubtless have been something more gentle in her voice, and more tender in her kiss: but to know it she must have learnt what it was better for her not to learn, and have understood what she will one day, perhaps, too well understand, — her mother's fate, and her father's character.

CHAPTER VIII.

"And then I met with one
Who was my fate; he saw me and I knew
'T was love that like swift light'ning darted through
My spirit; ere I thought, my heart was won
Spell-bound to his, for ever and for ever."

So many chapters in novels begin with descriptions of beautiful days that it seems useless to add another to those already written by abler painters in words; but to speak of flowers, of birds, of blue sky, and of sunshine, — of fleecy clouds and soft breezes, at certain times and on certain occasions, has its use, however hackneyed these expressions may be. It is to the mind what the recitative in an Italian opera is to the ear, or a frame to a painting. It brings the thoughts into tune; it calls up a variety of pictures, differing according to the imagination of the reader — to the scenes with which his memory is stored — to the impressions of which he is susceptible. "The day was beautiful." — Has not every one at once, before his eyes, some picture that appeals to his feelings or his fancy, that suggests a train of remembrances, that brings tears into his eyes, or a smile on his lips?

The day was beautiful on which Gertrude Lifford opened her window to examine the aspect of the sky,

and ascertain that it did not threaten to interfere with what she called her first day of pleasure. No such shade marred the face of the heaven. It was fair and bright, and hazy in the distance — an autumnal English sky — and even the flat extent of the park looked less ugly than usual, as it showed its green surface in the light of the early morning. Gertrude was satisfied, but her excited spirits would not suffer her to sit still. The hours seemed interminably long till she could reasonably begin to dress. Her dress had been a source of great anxiety to her; and as Madame de Staël was heard to say that she would have been willing to barter all her literary successes for the gratification of experiencing for a single day the pleasure of being beautiful, so Gertrude would almost have given up her beauty for the sake of knowing that she would be dressed like other people, — for the assurance of not appearing old-fashioned and ridiculous: for between her mother, who had not been out anywhere for years, and never but in Spain, and the milliner at Stonehouseleigh, whose knowledge of the fashions was limited, she felt great apprehensions as to the result.

But she need not have done so; she was not dressed like other people certainly, but if vanity were the cause of her uneasiness she might have been content. A piece of fine rare Indian muslin delicately embroidered in white — which had made part of her mother's trousseau, and had never been made up — was now turned

into a gown for her. A magnificent mantilla of old Spanish lace was her shawl. A Leghorn straw-hat with a wreath of poppies and corn-flowers, which, with the skill in such handiwork acquired in a convent, Mrs. Lifford had made for her, and a chain of elaborately carved coral going twice round her neck, completed her attire. When she went into her mother's room she found her sitting up on her couch, with various cases of antique workmanship smelling of foreign perfumes by her side. From one she took out some diamond rings, from another a pair of bracelets of a curious Moorish shape, which she put on her fingers and her wrists. Then she gave her a fan with highly finished paintings and richly ornamented handle, and showed her how to hold it. Then she bade her go to the foot of the couch that she might look at her; and as she stood there in all her picturesque beauty, with her youth and her brilliant dress, and the exultation in her eyes, she seemed a strange vision in that chapel-like room so full of holy pictures and religious ornaments, so dark for the sake of its suffering inmate, so silent and so still, that those who entered it instinctively lowered their voices, and trod lightly on the soft carpet.

"Gertrude," said her mother, fixing her eyes on her daughter's face, "The world is not happiness."

"Perhaps not, Mamma, but it is pleasure."

"I too went to a ball once, and I carried that fan

in my hand. It is a long time ago. It was at the time of my sister's marriage. She has died since. Her name was Assunta. Strange, was it not? Mine is Angustia. I am glad they did not call you so, Gertrude."

"Yes, dearest Mamma; see how well I use my fan. May I dance, Mamma?"

"Dearest, you have never learnt; you do not know how."

"I did not know how to do *this* a moment ago," she answered, playing again with the fan in the true Spanish fashion, and then coming round to her mother's side she bent over her fondly, and said, "To-morrow I shall tell you if the world has been pleasure to me. Do be well to-morrow, Mamma; you are much better than you were. There was a time when you could not have exerted yourself as much as you have done lately."

"Heaven bless thee!" was her mother's only answer.

"The carriage is at the door," the maid whispered.

"Mamma, must I say good-bye to papa?"

Mrs. Lifford winced, as it were, at the question, looked at her daughter, and seemed to hesitate. "Yes," she said at last. "Yes; come this way first; let me arrange those two curls that are straying on thy neck. Throw thy head a little back, and take these orange-

blossoms with thee. That will do; go to him, — he may remember the bull-fight at Seville."

"Shall I ask him if he does?"

"O no, no!" the mother answered, with a shudder, and with another kiss dismissed her child.

Into a room nearly as sombre as the one she had left, but with nothing in it to please the eye or the feelings, that vision of youth and beauty walked. In the attitude her mother had placed her in, with the weapons she had armed her with, into her father's presence she went, with a lighter step and a more confiding spirit than usual. He looked up from the table where he was examining some accounts, and said in a tone of annoyance,

"What do you want?"

"Nothing," she answered, in a faint voice.

"Then why do you come here?"

"I really don't know."

"It would be better, in that case, not to interrupt me."

"I will not do so again," she said, and left the room.

A servant met her at the door, and told her that her uncle was in the carriage. She hastened after him, jumped into the heavy, old-fashioned coach, and slowly and steadily they proceeded to Woodlands.

Father Lifford was making a great effort, — a real sacrifice — in thus putting himself out of the way, in

going out of all his usual habits, and amongst strangers. It was an act of true kindness; but his nature was too stiff to mould itself easily to such an effort. He could do such a thing because on the whole he thought it right, though at the same time he did not feel quite sure of it. That uncertainty, not as to his good intentions, but as to the wisdom of his unselfishness, gave him a certain degree of uneasiness which added to his intense dislike of the whole affair. He had ensconced himself in the corner of the coach, and fenced himself round with newspapers and books, as if he were about to take a long journey. First he said his office, which lasted a quarter of an hour, and then took up a newspaper, and then another, without turning round or speaking. He did not like a draught, and only one of the windows was let down. Gertrude, who found it hot, changed her place to the one opposite, so as to get the air which blew from the southwest. It fanned her cheek, and disarranged her hair, which did not signify, for it curled of itself; and taking off her bonnet, she drew over her head the hood of her mantilla. Father Lifford accidentally looked up from his newspaper, and the frown on his brow at that moment relaxed a little. For some time she was not conscious that he was looking at her, but was busily employed in twisting her coral chain into twenty different shapes. The old man seemed to dwell on thoughts which her face and her dress had suggested to him;

and when she observed that he was watching her, and said gently, "I am so much obliged to you, Father Lifford," and he answered "Poor little fool!" there was in his manner what she felt to be kindness.

When they arrived at the lodge, and drove through the park, the sight of tents decorated with flags and streamers met their eyes, and the sound of a band of music was heard in the distance. Other carriages — less heavy and stately than theirs — rapidly passed them, and the whole scene was bright and animated in the extreme. Woodlands was not a very fine place, there was nothing particularly picturesque about its scenery, but on a fine sunny day like the present one, it had enough of the beauty which belongs to most English country places to appear to advantage, especially as art and decoration had been profusely employed to give brilliancy to the aspect of the well laid out gardens, and the large cheerful rooms, which were almost as gay with flowers as the parterre.

Neither Father Lifford nor Gertrude were shy, but both were doubtless uncomfortable when (their names having been shouted from the bottom of the staircase) they entered the drawing-room where Mrs. Apley was receiving her guests — he from an intense aversion to the whole proceeding, and she from a consciousness that their appearance might excite surprise. She did not feel sure that her dress was not very peculiar. She had cast a quick glance at some of the women

who had arrived at the same time as herself, and it seemed to her that somehow they looked very different, and so they certainly did. A young antelope turned into the midst of a herd of English cows would not have presented a greater contrast than did the Spanish-looking girl amongst the tribe of fair-haired and pink-cheeked young ladies that filled the room. Father Lifford was too well bred not to be civil, however cross he might feel, and he said a few words to Mrs. Apley in a tone that did not betray how much he wished himself anywhere but where he was, and said something about his niece's ill health, but nothing about her husband's non-appearance; which all did equally well, for Mrs. Apley was rather deaf and very absent, and so replied with a sweet smile that she was truly glad to hear it, and as this was evidently kindly meant, it also perfectly answered its purpose.

As soon as she could, Gertrude passed into the next room and stood leaning against the wall, looking about her. The noise as well as the sight of a crowded room was new and strange to her. It surprises people who notice it for the first time to observe what a business talking is. Young people who have never been in society as children, and only heard of the amusements of grown up people, can imagine what is the pleasure of a ball, a concert, or a play, but to stand for hours talking as fast or listening as patiently as possible to persons, many if not most of them

neither agreeable nor amusing (for so they hear the great majority of the human race deemed by those who make society the business of their lives) should be either a great pleasure or a great duty strikes them as incomprehensible, or that it should be done at all, if it is neither the one nor the other, still more so. It is even strange to those who have been used to it all their lives, when they begin to analyse the subject; just as when we meditate on the intellectual process through which we read, write, or play on an instrument. We wonder over and could almost admire ourselves for it, if we did not remember in time that a child at a village school can do the same. No, society is sometimes a duty, sometimes a pleasure, but more generally the gratification of an instinct which requires it even when it has ceased to afford enjoyment. It is almost indispensable to those who are not exclusively engrossed by other objects; it takes us out of ourselves, and that is an excursion which we all more or less like, till we have learnt to live on such terms with that odd creature *Self*, as not to require a frequent leave of absence from its tormenting companionship.

Perhaps no one will so soon thoroughly understand as Gertrude the nature of that relief, no one may so soon appreciate as much that artificial means of killing time, but as yet she is only a looker on, and it seems unprofitable enough to watch the civil or

rude behaviour, the eager or listless manner, the too light or too heavy talk of the old young people or the young old people who congregate together in what by courtesy is called *the world.* By degrees she distinguished two or three persons whose appearance interested her, and soon Mrs. Apley came into the room where she was standing in patient contemplation of her fellow-creatures, and introduced some of them to her. Amongst others her son, the hero of the day. For several years Gertrude had known him by sight, and had been conscious that he admired her. There had even been a sort of approach to acquaintance between them. He had held a gate open for her, and once picked up something she had dropped and rode after her to restore it. He alluded to this in an agreeable manner, and entered into conversation with her in a way that made her feel herself immediately at her ease with him. She was not the least shy, although her eyes were so, and this contrast was piquant. Young Apley was amused by her remarks, and fascinated by her countenance. He had heard something of the peculiarities of her home, and knew how secluded had been her life. This excited his curiosity, and that — as well as his admiration of her beauty — made him long to know more of her, and when he was called away and obliged to attend to other people, he sent one of his sisters *to make the civil* to that pretty girl

with the corn-flowers in her hat. "She is such a duck," he whispered to Harriet Apley, who looked herself much more like that bird (not a popular one in his own character, but who stands in fashionable slang as the synonyme of charm) than the tall slim Gertrude, who would have looked somewhat contemptuous had she overheard this expression of praise from her admirer's lips.

She was a round pretty plump little creature, who had been *out* ever since she could speak. Wken asked at sixteen, if she was soon coming out, she laughed and said she had never been *in*. There was something in her pretty round mouth and her merry round eyes that had gained her the name of Cherry, when she used to appear at dessert as "the picture of a child," and now that she was grown up Cherry was still rather attractive, though no longer reckoned the picture or the "beau idéal" of anything. She was as civil as she could be to Gertrude, but soon got tired, for she thought talking to girls was very dull work. She was one of the people who speak of talking to woman, or talking to men, quite irrespectively of the merits or peculiarities of the individuals of each sex. The dullest man was (at a party at least) a more agreeable companion than the cleverest woman of her acquaintance, and that not merely from a spirit of coquetry, though perhaps she was a coquette, nor from the

wish to be married, though perhaps she did wish it, but simply because — as she often said — one did not go into society to talk to women.

Perhaps, if she had been *into* herself at any time of her life, she would have discovered the reason of this, but she was one of those whose self was always out of doors: not that she disagreed with it at home, but she had never attempted to commune with it there. Cherry had been watching for an opportunity of escaping from her present position, and was making inward comments on the impropriety of girls going out without a regular chaperon, or at least some acquaintances that they could join, when the sound of music from the gallery relieved her from her difficulty.

"I am sure you would like to hear the singing," she eagerly said, and naming the most famous singer of that time — one who joined to a wonderful voice the charm of a beautiful face and of an extraordinary genius — she led the way to a row of chairs not far from the pianoforte, and, after placing Gertrude there, in a few minutes slipped away with an easy conscience; and so she might as far as her new acquaintance was concerned, for the duet in the second act of Semiramide had begun. Both singers were perfect in their way, and Gertrude was soon wholly absorbed in the performance.

Some kinds of music require an experienced ear to enjoy them and are not appreciated at the first hearing,

but in this instance it was not so. It had an electric effect on one who had not been used to the magical charm of such singing; her cheeks flushed, her heart beat, and her eyes sparkled. The scene was altogether so novel; the crowd of faces surrounding her, — before her the great singer, in whose countenance and gestures the inspiration of genius and of passion was visible; whose slight frame quivered under that powerful emotion, — the words of defiance and of revenge hurled from one proud spirit to another, distinctly uttered and often reiterated, — the glorious harmony that embodied and accompanied them, all combined to work her up into a state of silent but oppressive excitement, which almost seemed to take away her breath.

While she drank in the sounds that thrilled through her being, she thought of her own destiny and asked herself what it would be. She successively wished to be a Queen or an Amazon, a singer or an actress, anything but what she was, anything that would give vent to the longing for power and for action which that spirited music awoke in her soul. Had *she* a voice that could win its way to a thousand hearts? Had she a mind wherewith to conceive, a pen wherewith to trace what might sway the impulse of minds without number? No, her spirit answered, no, it could not be. She was too young and too ignorant, too rash and too unstable for such hopes, for such tasks, for such stimulants as these. She must reign through other means, if reign she ever could. She

must sway hearts in another mode if to sway them she desired. How little did those placed at her side on that day guess the thoughts and the wishes, the projects and the hopes, which were at work in her mind as she sat there in that concert-room, looking beautiful and shy, and hiding her mouth with her enamelled fan.

In the midst of her reverie she looked towards the door, and her eyes met those of Mark Apley fixed upon her in evident admiration. "Is not beauty *power?*" she inwardly exclaimed; and felt it was, as his blue eyes paid homage to the shadowy beauty of her own. She felt it when he forced his way through the rows of chairs that stood between them, drawn on by the magnetism of her now downcast glance, and when he put into her hand a rose of great value, the only one of its kind that the conservatory contained. She felt it once again when the duet was over, and loud bursts of applause rose from the audience. "O how I like that sound," she exclaimed, "I had never heard it before; why don't you applaud, you who can?" she added in a low voice, and with a smile that made Mark Apley clap his hands with an energy that the pure love of music had never before prompted. "Now," she said, "I *must* hear that again. You *must* get it repeated, that beautiful music which says, 'I will subdue you,' and which with the same notes answers 'I will *not* be subdued.' Go, make them sing it again."

She laid her fan, with a pretty gesture of command,

not on but near his hand, and gave him a frown which enchanted him. A frown is a charming thing on a pretty face; it is seldom on any face an awful one. Look at the lines about the mouth: there will the young wife, or the husband who may have often frowned at each other in loving hours and lovers' quarrels, see the first expression of displeasure in the face whose frowns they have smilingly defied. Mark Apley rushed to the piano-forte, and obtained the repetition of the duet. Again Gertrude listened to it with delight, but now there was something perhaps more definite in her thoughts, and as she pulled to pieces the rare flower in her hand, she built up a vision as bright as its petals.

"See, you have destroyed it," he said, gathering up one of the rosy fragments from the floor. She put her little foot on the others, and said with a smile, "Regina e guerriera."

"But you should be queen of flowers, and not wa with your subjects."

"I would not if they swore allegiance to me; b this one was rebellious; it would not bend with breaking."

"You are inclined to be a tyrant, I think."

A cloud passed over the beautiful face on whic was gazing, and she answered quickly, "No, I lov tyrants; — but listen to what they are singing no what is it?"

But she would not let him answer, her fing

on her lip, and her soul was on the wing. "Suivez-moi," the wild appeal to liberty in Guillaume Tell was drawing her on, as it were, into a world she knew not yet. It seemed a summons to something new and free, into which her spirit had not yet soared; and when it ended she murmured, "Oui, que je te suive;" and Mark, who was very pleasing, but not very wise, asked, "Who?" and she answered, "The inspiration of the moment," which he did not understand, but he thought her very clever as well as very lovely, and never had felt so fascinated by any one before.

At that moment there was a movement amongst the singers and the audience. The principal performers left the immediate vicinity of the pianoforte, and Mrs. Apley went up to them, and said a few words, which were received with a gracious smile, and they placed themselves on a sofa, while through the door behind the pianoforte Maurice Redmond came in. He and Mary had been standing in that door-way ever since the concert had begun, and he had not for a moment taken off his eyes from the spot where Gertrude had been sitting with Mark Apley. All eyes were now turned upon him, and hers amongst the number. She saw that he was very pale, and with a rapid glance, perceived that Mary saw it also, and was looking as white as a sheet. He sat down at the pianoforte — there was an empty space between it and rows of people on every side. They were unusually silent at that mo-

ment; nobody was near him — his nervousness increased — he was evidently not well. Drops of sweat were starting on his forehead. Mary's colour went and came; she could not go to him, of course, or stir from her place, but she grew paler every second, and pressed her hand tightly on her heart. His nervousness was becoming insurmountable, and the silence of the audience increased with their wonder that he did not begin. Both felt dreadfully alone in that crowd, and when he said in a low husky voice, "It is of no use, I cannot play," she heard it and leant back against the wall with a faint giddy sensation at her heart.

But a light step at that moment crossed the room, and in an instant Gertrude was by his side. She put an open music-book on the desk to stand as it were between him and the audience; she gave him her smelling-bottle, and with a few of her gay words, and with a glance of her beautiful eyes, she revived him more than fresh air or a cordial could have done. It was what he wanted; she had done what she meant, and cared not then a straw that there were looks of astonishment, and whispered remarks going on in the room. The colour returned to his cheek; one look of ardent gratitude he turned upon her and said, "I can play now, Lady-Bird." She then went to Mary, stood by her in the door-way, and held her cold hand in hers, while he sounded a few preluding chords with an uncertain hand. They were both still afraid that

he would fail, but the fear was soon dissipated. It had been but a moment's depression — now he was more powerfully stimulated than he had ever been yet, and played far better than usual. He strained every nerve, and his frame now quivered with excitement, as it had done before with agitation. But he did wonders under this influence, and the fastidious artists who were listening to him were astonished at the performance of one, who had never yet appeared in London or in Paris, and whose name was not yet much known, except in the towns of Italy where he had gained some reputation. They warmly applauded, and as they led the way the rest of the society joined in it.

The delicate touch and profound sensibility with which he rung some changes on a German air, completed his success. The beautiful Prima Donna's eyes filled with tears, and she praised him when he had finished, as artists love to be praised. Mark Apley and his sisters and other acquaintances also gathered around him; kind flattering words, and warm expressions of pleasure were buzzed about his ears, and his soul was satisfied. Yes, his soul, not his vanity. There is a joy in praise which has nothing to do with vanity. It is a species of sympathy which those who possess genius in any line almost imperatively require. It is the breeze that fans the flame, the oil that feeds the lamp. Praise, when it is sincerely bestowed, and gratefully received, often produces a

kind of timid and humble happiness, as remote from vanity as a mother's exultation at her infant's beauty is different from a haughty consciousness of her own.

"Do you not feel proud of him, Mary?" Gertrude whispered as they too joined the group.

"Too happy to be proud," and she looked at her with grateful eyes. "O that those kind people," she continued, glancing at the Italian artists, "would now sing again. My selfish heart was so tight when they did so before, that it could not enjoy what would be now so delightful."

"*Your* selfish heart!" Gertrude exclaimed, with a smile.

"Yes, selfish indeed; why think so exclusively of one's self?" and she looked at Maurice as if there was but one self between them.

At that moment Mrs. Apley came up to Gertrude, and gave her a little note hastily written in pencil; it was from Father Lifford. Just after she had been placed in an unapproachable position in the music-room, he had received a message to the purport, that a dying person had sent for him soon after he had left home, and not a moment's time was to be lost in attending to it. He hastily requested Mrs. Apley kindly to take charge of Gertrude during the remainder of the day, — the only expedient he could think of, as the carriage had not been ordered till some hours

later, and he himself went off on foot to the cottage where he was wanted. Nothing could be more agreeable to Gertrude than this incident, as far as regarded her own prospect of amusement: the few hours before her appeared like a whole life of pleasure to be enjoyed ere the moment of departure should arrive.

The concert was at an end, and it was now rumoured that dancing was soon to begin. Several young men were introduced to Gertrude by Miss Apley, and she was soon surrounded by a number of persons, bent on making themselves agreeable to her. She grew very animated, and talked a great deal. Very amusing she was, though many of the things she said would not bear repetition; but they were lively, original, quaint, and withal natural, for there was not a grain of affectation about her. Mark Apley hovered near her, and drank in the sweet poison of love, as if he had been a bee diving into a honeysuckle. How every moment her spirits rose, as she perceived that a glance of her eye could bring him back to her side, if for an instant he made an effort to attend to others! The music struck up. "Will you waltz with me, Miss Lifford?"

The colour rushed into the rich olive tints of the Spanish girl's cheek.

"I cannot waltz. I do not know how."

"What! — have you never tried?"

"No, indeed. Do you think people dance at Lifford Grange?"

"O but you will dance naturally, — I know you will, — just as your hair curls naturally. I see it does, for the wind, as it blows it about, only makes it curl the more. Those locks at the back of your head that have escaped from the plaits, — they were not meant to curl; confess it."

"O nothing does what it ought with me," she answered; and seizing the two rebellious locks, she straightened them down as if to punish their wilfulness, and then threw them back to wave and curl on her neck. "Go and dance, Mr. Apley; I will look on, and perhaps learn."

"Come with me," he eagerly exclaimed; "there is no one in the gallery. I will teach you; it will be the work of a minute."

He gave her his arm, and they flew, rather than walked, through the rooms into the one where the concert had taken place. On one of the window-seats Maurice was sitting in a lounging attitude. He gave a start when they entered the room, and sprung to his feet. Gertrude let go Mr. Apley's arm, and cried out,

"Ah, there you are, — resting after your successes; enjoying your triumph."

"Do you think he would play us a waltz?" Mark

said to her in a low voice. "It would make you learn twice as soon."

"Maurice," she eagerly cried, "do play that German waltz that I used to like so much; Mr. Apley is going to teach me to waltz."

"Is he?" Maurice coldly answered. "I do not know that I can remember what you want."

"O but anything will do, — only make haste, because we have no time to lose."

If there was anything imperious in her manner of saying this, it was only the wilfulness of a child that would not be contradicted by one who had always yielded to her slightest wishes; but susceptible as he was, it wounded him to the quick. He felt as if the world had already done its work with her, and that she spoke to him in a tone of offensive dictation. He flushed to the very temples as he sat down at the pianoforte, and began playing in a rapid and abrupt manner. It was not a gay tune, or else he played it strangely. She kept calling out to him now and then, "Not so fast," — or, "You are not playing so well as usual, Maurice!" — and he bit his lips almost through with vexation.

And the truth was, he did not play well. There was an accompaniment that put him out singularly, — the noise of swift steps; the rustle of a muslin dress; the tone of a joyous laugh; the sound of two voices interchanging gay reproofs and instructions. Once

an exclamation — "O stop, I am so giddy;" and the answer, "O no, no, don't stop." But the music ceased at once, and the musician darted up from his place, and rushed forward. What business had he to do so? He felt it, and turning back as suddenly, played a wild air of Strauss's with feverish vehemence, and then the waltz in Robert le Diable, which intermingles notes of despairing sweetness with the discords of hell. "That will do, Maurice — I thank you so much. I have learnt all I wanted." And away she went with her light step, her beautiful figure, her flashing eyes, and her unconsciousness of the pain she left behind her.

"Come, Mary, have you had enough of this *pleasure* for to-day? Shall we steal away by the back door, find the pony chaise, and go home?" "Yes," she said, and put her arm in his, and soon they were driving through fragrant fir woods, in the refreshing coolness of the evening. They did not talk of Woodlands, but he said he should like to go and shut himself up with her in some quiet retreat, where the sounds of the world would never reach them, where only Mary's voice would be heard — only Mary's love would be known.

"Still your Italian plans," she answered with a smile.

"O no, not Italy — some quiet English spot. I am tired of beauty — weary of admiring — sick of

efforts and struggles. Let me float down the stream hand in hand with you, Mary."

"No, no! it is up, not down the stream that we must row. What has made you so faint-hearted, Maurice? Do you not remember those lines you used to repeat to me in London, when I pined much for the cottage and the country?"

> "O Time, O life, ye were not made
> For languid dreaming in the shade,
> Nor sinful hearts to moor all day
> By lily isle or grassy bay,
> Nor drink at noontide's balmy hours
> Sweet opiates from the meadow flowers."

"O for a lily isle," he exclaimed, "or grassy bay; if such there are in life's river! Or an opiate that will send one to sleep on its shore!"

"No, no, my dearest child, you must ply your oars with courage, even though it be against the tide; you must not lay them down while there is work to do."

"Why do you call me *child*, Mary?"

"It is my fancy. I think there is something of a mother's love in my affection for you, and then it seems to give me a right to scold you sometimes."

"You are an angel, Mary. How calm and sweet every thing is now! There was something oppressive in the air at Woodlands."

After a pause, he said, "Mary, we must not be ungrateful — she was very kind." She turned to him surprised. Was he speaking of Gertrude? She had

not felt ungrateful to her; on the contrary — what did he mean?

"O, nothing, nothing," he answered, and sighed.

The light died away before they reached their home. The moon threw its rays on the quiet waters of the Leigh. The mignonette and the carnation smelt sweetly in the widow's garden, and Mary — as she sat at the window of her little bed-room — felt glad that the day was come to an end, and that not many such were likely to recur in her life.

Gertrude, in the mean time, was in the midst of the ball which had succeeded the other amusements of the day at Woodlands. The carriage came for her at six, but she was persuaded to keep it waiting till twelve. In Miss Apley's room she made such alterations in her dress as could be contrived at a moment's notice: her mantle and straw-hat were put aside, some white and red camellias were arranged in her hair. A nosegay of hot-house flowers, which had filled a vase on the dressing table, was fastened on her breast, and relieved the plainness of her simple muslin corsage. As she stood at the end of the room by the ride of Mark Apley, waiting for the music to strike up, and with true Spanish grace playing with her large fan, many eyes were turned upon her, and many inquiries made about her. She *had* learnt to waltz during her brief lesson in the gallery; soon she was flying round the room, her feet — her almost incredibly small feet

— scarcely touching the ground, her cheeks flushed with exercise and animation, and her partners every moment increasing, and undisguised admiration raising her spirits to the highest pitch.

If she had been plain or only ordinarily good-looking, it might have been wise to send her for once into that world which she had so longed to be acquainted with. She might have been disenchanted with what she had pictured to herself as so delightful, and mortification might have changed the bias of her excitable temper into some other channel; but her beauty, her originality, and the peculiarity of her manners — which were refined without being conventional and strange, but at the same time graceful — obtained her that kind of success which she but too well appreciated, but too much enjoyed.

In the course of the evening the heat of the ball-room grew intense, and through one of the open windows several persons went into the shrubbery to breathe the fresh air, and walked towards a grotto which stood at the end of one of the alleys. Gertrude had just done waltzing for the third or fourth time, and followed some young girls, whose acquaintance she had made, out of the stifling room into the garden. They loitered near the house, but out of curiosity she went further and arrived at the grotto, which looked invitingly cool. She was just going to step into it, attracted by the refreshing sound of the

water which trickled down its walls, when somebody said to her, "Pray forgive me for speaking to you, but you should not go into that place, heated as you are. It is dangerous."

Few and simple as were the words of the speaker, they affected her in a singular manner. She felt touched without knowing why, and turned round to look at the person who had given her this warning. He was unlike any one she had ever seen, except a picture in her mother's room of the Duc de Gandia, by Velasquez, which had been since her childhood her ideal of manly beauty. That face alone had borne any resemblance to the one which was now before her. So perfectly symmetrical, so majestically good, so expressive, and yet so calm. A tall slim figure, a well-shaped head with a most thoughtful brow, a smile of strange beauty, an attitude at once dignified and easy — the head a little thrown back, and the hand resting on the left hip.

She had not felt shy at any time that day, nor was she given to be shy; but now a sensation of that kind stole over her, and she said "Thank you" with an unusual timidity, and bowed her head as she did so, with something of submission as well as of acknowledgment. "I hope you have not thought me impertinent," he said, as she turned back towards the house. This time she smiled as she answered, "O, no!" and hoped he would speak again; but he did not, and she

returned to the ball-room, and sat down in a corner, far from any one she knew.

The first sight of the Apollo of Belvedere has made a person burst into tears — a beautiful landscape has affected others in the same way — the sight of the Alps or of the sea has awakened strong emotion — eloquence, even when not on a pathetic subject, has stirred the deep well-springs of feeling — and who has not known the impression which a procession, the hurrahs of a crowd, or a sudden burst of music has made upon them? Why should it, then, be strange that the sight of physical and intellectual beauty, of a commanding form, visibly inhabited by a superior spirit, should have had something of the same effect on Gertrude, and that she should have felt her eyes filling with tears — a very rare thing with her.

But there might be something else in this emotion. She had been very happy that day — so she told herself and so she believed — but had she not felt in the very depth of her young heart, that it had been a lonely sort of happiness, that she had been praised and admired and made much of, but no father's or mother's eyes had been upon her, no one had led her by the hand before all those strangers and said: "She is mine, look at her if you will, love her even if you choose, but your new love is nothing to the love with which we have cherished her in our bosoms, and en-

shrined her in our heart." No one had watched her success with pleasure — no one as she left the heated ball-room had thrown a shawl over her shoulders, as all the careful mothers were doing to their children, — no one had checked or reproved or caressed her that day. Singular waywardness of the human heart — unconscious yearnings after sympathy! A word of kindness from a stranger had touched a spring almost unknown to herself. There she sat watching or seeming to watch the dancers, and new thoughts were in her mind, or rather a new picture in her mind's eye, which was never to leave it again. There it was to remain, perhaps only as a dream that has been dreamt, and haunts us more or less through life, and embodies our imaginings when in romances or in poetry we read of beauty and of love, or when at other times we try to realize the presence of an angel or a hero, of the conquering archangel or the glorious Maccabee. For the first time in her life Gertrude had found it pleasant to submit, and she found pleasure in dwelling on that thought, in rehearsing again in her mind that little act of submission to a perfect stranger, and she made castles in the air about future opportunities of showing the same docility again.

"Do come and dance the cotillon with me, Miss Lifford," Mark Apley exclaimed, as he swiftly crossed the room and stood smiling before her. She sprung eagerly to her feet. She was impatient to fly again

over the smooth floor. The music again was resounding, exciting and delighting every sense, and making her heart bound in time with its quick and wild measure. Mark Apley's voice was also pleasant in her ears, for he said he should never lose sight of her again. That he would sit for hours on the bridge of Stonehouseleigh, because she must sometimes drive or walk into the town. That he would go and hear Vespers at the Catholic chapel, for there he should see her — the saint of his devotion. That he was not to be baffled when he had set his heart on anything, and that after spending the happiest day of his life in her society, he should certainly never submit not to see her again.

All this was said in joke, but there was something earnest in it too. She saw perfectly how much he admired her; and music, and admiration, and dancing, and flattery, and nonsense, and liberty were pleasant things enough, but in the midst of them all castle-building went on. "If that voice," she said to herself, "that spoke to me at the grotto were again to address me now, — if it were to say: 'Do not dance so wildly — do not flirt so rashly — it is dangerous!' I should stop at once, like a chidden child, and feel glad to be thus rebuked." But she neither heard that voice again, nor did she see the face which in and out of the ball-room her eyes were ever searching for. She asked Miss Apley, and then Mark, and one or

two other persons, who was a tall dark gentleman whom she had seen in the shrubbery. One told her it must have been Mr. Luxmoor, the member for the county, another did not know — could not imagine whom she meant, a third thought it might have been one of the Italian singers, but this she knew could not be, because of the good English which the stranger spoke; and nothing else could she learn.

At past twelve o'clock Gertrude's cloak was put on, her hands affectionately pressed by Mrs. Apley and her daughters, with many entreaties not to let their acquaintance drop, but to come and see them as often as she could. Mark took her to the carriage. She saw him watching her from the colonnade, as long as she was in sight, and she drove home with a confusion of ideas in her head, and fatigue and excitement bewildering her thoughts. It seemed to her as if she had lived through a whole life since she left home that morning with Father Lifford. But one thought was uppermost — one image was prominent — one impression supreme, and as she laid her tired, but not sleepy head on the pillow, the idea that passed through her mind was this: "To-morrow I shall look at the Duke of Gandia's picture."

CHAPTER IX.

"The eloquence of goodness
Scatters not words in the ear, but grafteth them
To grow there and to bear."

SHAKESPEARE.

"Love is a great transformer."

On the morrow Mrs. Lifford was too ill to speak. The exertions of the last few days had been too much for her, and the doctor desired that none but her maid should go near her. When Gertrude came down later than usual to the breakfast-room, she found that her two usual companions had left it, — her uncle had gone to the same cottage where he had been summoned the day before, and her father had already shut himself up in his study. She threw the windows wide open, and sat down to her solitary meal, which was quickly finished. Then she took a camp-stool, and Luigi da Porto's romance of Romeo and Giulet, which Maurice had brought with him from Italy. She took them into the shade, underneath one of the largest trees of the park, and there remained for several hours reading and dreaming alternately. She had never felt to dislike Lifford Grange so little. She wanted time for thinking or rather musing, and the profound stillness of that wide solitary park was not irksome then.

It was one of those sultry days in September when not a leaf stirs, when scarcely an insect buzzes in the sunshine; when Nature seems asleep in the plenitude of her power — she has yielded up her harvest, and reposes from her labour. Gertrude had read the words which the enamoured girl addresses to young Montague when he takes her hand in the dance, at that ball which decides her fate, "Benedetta sia la vostra venuta qui presso me, Messer Romeo," and then the book dropped from her hand upon her knee, and she wondered if such a sudden love as that were indeed possible; and on this theme she meditated long. She thought of Jacob and Rachel, of James of Scotland and Madeleine of France, and then again of Romeo and Juliet, — and believed in love at first sight.

Her eyes fixed on the green grass; her head resting on her breast, so motionless that she heard the sound of her own breathing; her hands joined together on the book, she mentally made as it were her profession of that faith, — and seldom as it occurs, who can deny that such love there is? It is not common, perhaps it is undesirable — perhaps unreasonable — but, if it is real, there may be in it as much truth and strength and purity, as in the affections which are excited by a few weeks' flirting, stimulated on the one side by coquetry and on the other by vanity. If at the end of three months' flirtation, and of such conversations as passed the day before between her and

Mark Apley, Gertrude had thought herself in love with him, would she or ought she to have stood higher in her own esteem, or in ours, than she does now, when she is conscious of having yielded up her heart at first sight to one whose countenance indeed may be deceitful, whose soul and whose intellect may be unequal to the stamp affixed on his brow, to the promise of his face; but in whom even if such were the case, she would only have been misled to pay homage to the semblance of all that is admirable in man?

Who he was, whence he came, she knew not; what he was, still less: but this very ignorance reassured her, and gave her confidence in the nature of the impression he had made upon her. That he could be anything but exalted in character and intellect she felt to be impossible, and would have staked her life on his excellence, without an instant's hesitation. "Poor little fool," some people will say — ay, it was folly, but not of the meanest sort, and we pity those who have never seen the man on the faith of whose eyes they would have done the same.

While she was thus contemplating, a footstep roused her from her abstraction. It was Father Lifford walking slowly along on his way back to the house. He looked hot and fatigued. Gertrude sprang up from her hiding-place under the spreading boughs, and called to him eagerly:

"Here is a stool, Father Lifford; do come and rest. The air is so sultry."

"Nonsense, child, I am not tired."

"Do sit down a moment," she said in a tone so unusual that he looked surprised, and perhaps something her mother had said to him, in their last long conversation, came into his mind; for his manner changed, and, sitting down as she wished, he wiped his forehead with his handkerchief, and asked her how she felt after a day of such unaccustomed fatigue and excitement.

She had taken her seat opposite to him, on one of the low branches of the elm, her arm twisted round another, and her feet scarcely reaching the ground.

"I am very well, Father Lifford."

"That is more than you look. You have not a bit of colour in your cheeks."

"It is the heat."

"It is sitting up late."

"O no, I never slept better in my life."

"What are you doing here?" She pulled some leaves off the branch and let them fall on the book which was lying on the grass. He pushed them aside with his stick and turned over the pages with it.

"An Italian novel. How very useful! Ah, Gertrude, it is not in this way that you will prepare for yourself such a close to your life as the one I have witnessed to-day."

"To-day — have you seen any one die to-day?"

"Indeed I have, and a girl scarcely older than yourself."

"Was it to her that you were called yesterday?"

"It was; and she died this morning."

"Resigned?"

"Ay, more than resigned — very happy."

"Had she been happy on earth?"

"Yes, nobody in her station could have been more so."

"Did any one love her?"

"Her parents, her brothers and sisters, and she was engaged to be married to a young man who was also very fond of her."

"Then, I am not surprised that she died happy."

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean that she had had her share of happiness, and it had made her good, and so she was fit for death. Do you know, Father, a strange thing? I believe I should be more resigned to die to-day than I could have been a few days ago."

"I am glad to hear it, and pray why so?"

"If you cannot guess, I don't think I can tell you."

"I am not going to guess, but I wish to put to you a question, — do you think you deserve to be happy?"

"I am afraid not," she answered seriously. "I am more afraid not than ever. But let me ask you a

question, and do not snub me, dear Father Lifford, because really I want you to answer it, — do not you think I should have been better if I had been happier?"

"I have always told you, child, that you might have been happy if you had chosen it. Why, I have known a poor creature in a hospital, who had never had a moment's ease since her birth, as happy as the day was long. It is your stubbornness that makes you unhappy, and this is an answer to your question."

"No, I do not think it is. Which is the cause, and which is the effect? *That* is the question. Tenderness might have made me less stubborn."

"There *is* a tenderness, my child, which should have subdued your heart long ago. I greatly fear that it is sorrow which will have to do that work for you. If small trials, if the sufferings of a wayward spirit are not enough to bring you to His feet, God may in mercy send you some of those strange afflictions which break the heart which would not bend, and destroy the spirit that would not yield."

She joined her hands, and said in a low voice: "Pray for me, that it may not be so."

He was pleased at her answer, and looked at her kindly. Then, taking up her book from the ground, and having turned over its pages, he said in a milder tone of expostulation than usual: "Now, what teaching is this? Nothing but praise of that poor creature for killing herself on the body of her lover. Can anything

be more dreadful. If the story be a true one, as it is said, one may charitably hope that she went mad in that horrid place, and did it in a fit of insanity; but here the author coolly laments that such an example of real love does not occur more frequently, and, I dare say, so besotted was he with this absurd nonsense, that he was not even conscious that he was saying something very wicked."

"I had not thought of that. But do you think Juliet could have helped being in love with Romeo?"

"Of course she could. Why, if Romeo had been a married man — and so he might have been for aught she knew at first — what would she have done? Put him out of her head, of course, or been a great sinner. Nothing is impossible with a good will, and the grace of God."

Strange to say, it had not yet occurred to Gertrude that the stranger who had made so singular an impression upon her, the day before, might be married; and Juliet's words passed through her mind: "If he be married, my grave is like to be my wedding-bed." She smiled at her own folly, for she had formed no definite hopes or ideas connected with that person, but wished to indulge to the uttermost the recollection of that brief interview, and to build upon it certain romantic dreams incompatible with such a possibility. However, making an effort over herself, she recurred to the subject of the girl who had died that day.

"Had she during her illness all the comforts that she could want?" she asked.

"Yes, — she did not care much for anything of the kind, but what was needful she had. What she seemed most anxious about were her funeral expenses, that they should not be a burthen to her parents."

"And what has been done about that?"

"M. d'Arberg pays for them."

"Who?"

"M. d'Arberg, that foreigner who is staying at Woodlands."

"What M. d'Arberg? Not Maurice Redmond's friend?"

"Yes, the same. Did not you see him yesterday? I just caught sight of him as I was leaving the house. He came to me the other day to speak about the poor Thorns, and I have met him two or three times at their cottage."

"How did he find them out, I wonder?"

"One of Thorn's sons had been his groom, I believe. He is not quite a stranger in this neighbourhood. There is some connexion between him and the Apleys."

"Is he tall and dark, and like the picture of St. Francis Borgia in mamma's room?"

"Ay, well perhaps he is. I felt as if I had seen his face before. He is more like a Spaniard than a Frenchman."

"But is he French?"

"Partly so; his father was a German, I believe, naturalized in France; his mother was English or Irish, I don't know which. Have you never heard of his books? — But I forget, you only read this sort of thing," and with his stick he pointed contemptuously at the prostrate novel.

"You know you do not recommend *French* books to me, Father Lifford," Gertrude meekly answered, with a merry look in her eyes, for her heart was bounding with delight.

"That is because you love poison, and French poison is the worst of all. Well, I must go home now; it is getting late."

"O do stop a minute longer, or let me walk back with you; I don't mind the sun. But tell me about M. d'Arberg and his books."

"Why, most Frenchmen are humbugs, but I believe he is a good man."

"Most Frenchmen humbugs! Now, Father Lifford, that is the sort of thing you say but I am sure you don't mean, and it vexes me so!"

"Well, put *many* for *most*, and then the phrase will do."

"Strike out *French* also, and it will do still better."

"No, no, I don't assent to that omission. Come, open the umbrella, — the sun will make your silly head ache."

"What has M. d'Arberg written?"

"Philosophical Essays on Christianity. I hate that word Philosophy; but he means well."

"And do you like the book?"

"Very well; as much as I can like any French book. He has some peculiar notions; but on the whole it is well enough. But nothing of that sort suits *you*, you know. Verse-books, and story-books, and trash are your delight."

"What is M. d'Arberg doing here?"

"Why, visiting his friends, I suppose. Somebody said he had property hereabouts that his mother left him. He is poking about amongst the Irish poor in the manufacturing towns, they say. I hope he has not got a bee in his bonnet."

"Have you that book here, Father Lifford?" Gertrude asked, as they reached the house.

"It belongs to Maurice Redmond; but I believe I have it in my room."

"Will you lend it me?"

"You will not read it."

"Shall I promise to do so?" she asked, with a smile.

"No, but if I let you have it, you must leave off poring over those thrashy novels that are always lying on your table."

"Do you call 'Delphine' trash?"

"Ay, and the worst species of it, — all the more mischievous for its cleverness."

"Have you read it, Father Lifford?"

"No, I never read such things; but I know enough of its tendency to warn you against it."

"Then I will bring you all the volumes, though I am dying to know the end of the story, and you shall give me M. d'Arberg's book instead. That will be an exchange that will suit us both."

With these words she left him, and in a moment appeared at the door of his room with the novel in her hand, and carried off, as a miser bears away a load of sterling gold, the books which had now become so full of interest to her.

She went into the library on the first floor, and to her accustomed couch, the window-seat.

The huge spider was, as usual, laying in wait in his web, and the dying flies strewed about the floor; her favourite books were in their places, but she passed them with an indifferent eye, for all her interest was absorbed by the volumes in her hand. The name of Adrien d'Arberg was on the title-page, and it was his thoughts that she was going to read. Silently, he would speak to her again, in her solitude, and she would learn to know him, even without meeting him again. But now that she knew his name, how many recollections of what Maurice had related to her about him crowded on her memory, and how well they suited

with his face, with his voice, and with his attitude! Even then he was no stranger to her, and what would it be when she should have read through those volumes, into which so much of his soul and his mind must have passed?

She began to read; the style was entirely new to her. She was not well acquainted with that species of modern literature to which this book belonged, though well versed in the writings of past times both in French and in English; she had never before met with a work which employed against vice and impiety all the fascinations of style, the sarcastic ingenuity, and the impassioned sensibility that are so often displayed in their service. It took her by surprise. Almost every one has known, at least once in their lives, what it is to meet with a book in which, as if for the first time, another mind answers their own mind; and the vague sketches which were lying on the surface of the soul are filled up, as it were, by a master's hand. We then almost worship the spirit that speaks to us through its pages.

There are various magicians of this description — evil spirits and good — ever at work in that line: much is dormant in human hearts which their spells can awaken into existence. Have you ever gazed in a sculptor's studio on the rough block of marble out of which is to come forth the conception of his genius? Perhaps the likeness of some beautiful child of earth,

or the fanciful image of a Pagan divinity, — the triumph of form, the dream of sensuality; or else the sublime result of a Christian's meditation, or a poet's inspiration. There it lies — ready to appear at the command, and beneath the hand of its master. Has not the author with his pen sometimes the same power as the sculptor with his chisel? May he not call into life, and mould into form those vague and floating tendencies which haunt the human soul? May he not breathe passions yet unknown into its secret recesses, and arouse vices into play which were passively awaiting his foul touch? — or, on the other hand, may he not awaken the love of virtue by the intense homage he pays her; kindle devotion by the flame that flies from his bosom to his pen, and sound the call to perfection by the clarion-cry of his own faith?

These things have been done, and are doing every day. Life and death are handed down from generation to generation, in the phœnix-like immortality of those works which, in edition after edition, transmit their poison or their balm from one age to another. The hand of Voltaire! — the hand of St. Francis of Sales! — helpless, lifeless, and motionless they lie, in the shrine of the Pantheon, and in the humble church of Annecy, till the day of the Resurrection! — their works, in the words of the Bible "are gone before them," ay, before them in one sense, but have tarried behind them in another.

Gertrude read, and thought, and read again, and the hours flew by unheeded. As certain perfumes have more power when the frame is peculiarly susceptible, — as certain sounds vibrate on the ear with more force at one moment than at another, according to the bodily state, so books impress the mind at certain times in a way which, earlier or later, they might not have done. And it is probable that the strong impression which Adrien had made upon her, during that brief instant when a few words had passed between them, paved the way for the effect which his writings were to have upon her. They did not treat exclusively of religion or of morality; — they were not wholly ascetic or imaginative, argumentative or illustrative. They had been originally written with a limited purpose, but an unlimited scope, — to convince a dear friend of the truth of Religion, not by evidences alone, not by sentiments merely, but by every appeal to reason — every illustration from analogy — every weapon offensive and defensive which Truth and Intellect can furnish, and Faith and Genius can wield.

Gertrude had never had even an intellectual doubt of the truth of her religion, and imperfect as her conduct often was, it would have been often more blamable but for the restraining power which that religion exercised over her: at certain times of her life she had known the joys of devotion, but her intellect had not been sufficiently appealed to. Her

understanding had not yet grasped the extraordinary relation that exists between Faith in its full Catholic sense and everything great, good, and beautiful in the domain of reason and of feeling — of science and of art. Adrien's writings seemed to open before her new vistas in every direction, and to display the whole marvellous connexion between the highest intellectual aspirations of the human mind, and the smallest point of revealed doctrine. Religion no longer appeared as something true and sacred indeed, but as concerned only with one portion of man's heart — one region of his soul — one aspect of his life; but as the point on which his whole existence revolves, on which his public as well as his private actions must turn, the only principle, the ruling power, the absolute master of every impulse, the disposer of every hour.

She saw the visible world not merely moving alongside but encompassed on every side by a supernatural one, the contact of which becomes every day more startlingly plain. It alluded to the modern discoveries of science, so extraordinarily illustrative of the faith of the Church. It spoke of the sublime aspirations through which the old philosophers felt their way after truth, and how Plato dared to guess what the first Catechism teaches. The perfectibility of man in its Christian sense, the mystery of his vocation, the depths to which he falls, the heights to which he rises, were dwelt on each in turn. Through the confessions

of sceptics, the admissions of enemies, the homage of antagonists, through history and science, through the mind to the soul, the chain of evidence made its way. The reasoning was close and as calm as truth, but the feeling was intense, and fervent as love. It was as clever as if the intellect alone had been employed upon it; it was as persuasive as if the heart had alone been engaged in it. Was it strange that it absorbed her? — then roused and then strengthened her? That new thoughts, new interests, new resolutions, were formed? — that her studies were changed? — that her hours were spent differently? — that to get a book alluded to in *that* book, and they were many, became one of her greatest pleasures. — That to learn some of its eloquent pages by heart was her recreation? — that stealing to her mother's side whenever her health allowed of it, she read to her those passages which were most calculated to please her, and then kissing away the tears that sometimes stole down her face, she would lay her cheek against hers and whisper, "I knew you would like it?"

This was all well, but it was better still that in many practical ways she, day by day, improved, — that she was more assiduous in her devotions, more patient in little trials, less bitter towards her father, more tender to her mother, — that she appreciated Father Lifford's qualities more, and cared less for his peculiarities. But it was not so well that a strong

human feeling was mixed up with all this, though it may be that Heaven's mercy may work good through its means. The sand on which this promising edifice is rising may indeed harden into stone, and the winds blow, and the rain fall, and its fair proportions stand, — for in that case it will be founded on the rock. But if it rests on nothing but the shifting ground of passion or of fancy — what then will be its fate?

She is always copying the Duc de Gandia's picture, and she has written under it these lines from her old favourite Metastasio, though she seldom reads him now —

"E proviamo al mondo
Che nato in nobil core
Sol frutti di virtú
Produce amore."

CHAPTER X.

"A prince can make a belted knight,
A marquis, duke, and a' that,
But an honest man 's aboon his might,
Guid faith! he mauna' fa' that.
For a' that and a' that,
Their dignities and a' that,
The pith o' sense, and pride o' worth
Are higher ranks than a' that."

BURNS.

"Virtue and knowledge are endowments greater
Than nobleness and riches; careless heirs
May the two latter darken and expand;
But immortality attends the former,
Making man a god."

SHAKESPEARE.

WEEKS and months passed away, and nothing worthy of remark disturbed the even tenor of Gertrude's life. She went once or twice to Woodlands, but the Apleys were often away, and none of them except Mark seemed particularly anxious to keep up the acquaintance. Perhaps they had been alarmed at his evident admiration of her, and did not wish to encourage any further intimacy between them. Whenever he was at home he contrived to meet her in her walks, and to interchange a few words with her. Sometimes, when his manner was particularly eager, it occurred to her how easily, by a little encouragement, she might bring him to propose to her, and what a

change would thus be brought about in her destiny; but it was never more than a passing thought. Her romantic admiration for Adrien d'Arberg forbade her entertaining it; and though she liked these brief interviews, and her manner did not by any means deter Mark from seeking them, yet one of the "fruits of virtue" which grew out of that sentiment was a reserve in encouraging attentions, which doubtless, as far as they went, were by no means disagreeable to her.

But this very reserve increased Mark's admiration. At the breakfast he had been fascinated by her beauty and amused by her cleverness, which he did not quite understand, though it charmed him like a firework or a French play: but when he met her now there was something more thoughtful in her face, more gentle in her manner; and this became her so well, and gave him such an interest about her, that he would sometimes sit on his horse at the gate of Lifford Grange, gazing with a wistful look at her retreating figure, as she walked up the sepulchral avenue of yew trees towards that house into which no strangers ever entered, and which appeared to him almost like an enchanted palace.

Gertrude had amused herself one day by telling him a wonderful ghost-story about it, which made his hair stand on end, but which he liked so much to hear her relate that almost every time he met her, he used to begin again with, "Now you know I don't believe

that story you told me the other day;" and each time she added some new detail which made him exclaim, "O now come, that is too bad — you don't expect me to believe that?" But he went away for a long time that winter, and Gertrude missed him much, for it was impossible not to like to have her path crossed by such a kind smile, and such cheerful words. His good humour was like sunshine, and his merry laugh had grown familiar to her as something that belonged to those lanes and commons where she so often met him — as the smell of the gorse, or the song of the birds.

She still went often to the cottage at Stonehouse-leigh, and now had a new and powerful interest in talking to Maurice. She asked him a thousand questions about the places where he had been with M. d'Arberg. During the years that he had spent with him in Rome, he had been engaged in writing that work which had so deeply interested her, and every minute detail concerning it she listened to with avidity.

"We lived at that time," Maurice told her, "in an apartment near the quattre Fontane, and M. d'Arberg used to write in a little garden full of violets, with a trellis of lemon-trees on one side, and a view over Rome on the other. I often looked at him as he sat at work, and thought what a good model he would have afforded a painter for a St. John writing his Gospel, or a St. Thomas Aquinas his Summa: he

never looked impatient or anxious, but used to write those eloquent pages so composedly and fluently that I could almost have fancied I saw his guardian angel by his side dictating to him; and if anybody interrupted him — some tiresome acquaintance, or some begging friar — he would put down his pen, and listen to them with a countenance as undisturbed as if he had nothing else in the world to occupy or engross him. When I look back to the time I spent with that man, I can hardly believe in the perfection of his character, — so perfect, just because it had so little pretension."

"He must be, however, a person to be afraid of," Gertrude said; "goodness and cleverness combined would always be somewhat awful, I should think."

"Well, I never felt that with him. He is so very indulgent, — not merely that he will not say severe things, but one feels sure he does not think them."

"Yet in his writings he lashes with merciless severity certain modes of action and of thought."

"Ay, but no one ever made a wider distinction between the sin and the sinner, the error that blinds a man, and the man whom error blinds; he made a brilliant campaign in Algeria some years ago, and was as distinguished by his valour at that time as he has been since by his literary labours."

"And what made him leave the army?"

"He had only entered it for a particular purpose.

The first year that he went into society at Paris he happened to defend the character of one of his friends with so much warmth, that the person who had slandered that friend conceived himself insulted, and called him out. He refused to fight, but the very next day proceeded to join the African army, where he established a reputation which raised him above the suspicion of cowardice. A splendid career was open to him, but he had no vocation for a military life, and retired from it as soon as a peace was concluded. He was adored by the troop he commanded — indeed I have never met with any one who has had any intercourse with him who could resist the influence of his character and of his manners. Have you read the life he wrote of Queen Christina of Sweden?"

"O no; have you got it?"

"I am afraid not. I went with him into the Tyrol, just at the time he was busy with it. He wished to see the Franciscan Church at Inspruck, which is connected with her history. I shall never forget his admiration of the wonderful tomb of the Emperor Maximilian, in that glorious church. Those twenty-eight colossal bronze figures keeping their silent unremitting watch over the monument of the great warrior. How he liked the Tyrol! There was something so congenial to his feelings, so akin to his own character, in the strength and simplicity of its people; in the intimate connexion between the highest beauties of

nature, the devotional spirit of the inhabitants, and the pervading influence of religion, which seems there to impregnate the very air — to turn every hill into a Calvary, every valley into an oratory, and every church-yard into a garden. We had been staying at Venice, the city of my idolatry, the enchantress of the earth, the goddess of the sea; beauty bewildering every sense, music floating on the breeze, romance hovering over each stone of its palaces, each ripple of its wave, every stroke of the oar, every turn of the lagoons. I still remembered its moonlight nights, its noonday breezes; the Byzantine churches with their eastern cupolas, their mosaic pavements, their marble landing-places; the gentle splash of the water as we neared them in the gondolas; the musical cry of the gondoliers, as we shot swiftly round the corners; the soft sweet accents of the Venetian tongue; the luxurious repose of the body; the dreaming activity of the excited imagination, — it was all vivid in my mind as an Eastern story just perused, as a fairy tale realised; and when M. d'Arberg pointed out to me one night the moon shining coldly and sternly on one of the snowy peaks of the Alps, while the forests of fir beneath were lying in darkness, except where a solitary lamp (an earthly star as he called it) was burning before a way-side sanctuary, half way down the mountain, I could not forbear exclaiming, 'Give me back St. Mark and its piazza, the sky of Italy and the moon

of Venice.' He smiled and said, 'I am afraid, Maurice, that you would have preferred the enchantress, Armida, to the lady in Comus,'"

Gertrude's eyes were riveted on Maurice, and she longed for him to talk on. He saw those eyes and their expression; at that moment there flashed across him something that was at once like a fear and a hope. How many ideas the brain can hold in one instant, and what different emotions agitate the heart at the same time! He thought of their childish sports in the forest; he thought of the lessons he had given her — of her appearance at the cottage the day that her father had dismissed him — of the way in which she had come and stood by his side, when he was taken ill at the Woodlands' breakfast; and now, how often she took occasion to stop at the cottage, and to linger there in conversation with him: and the expression of her eyes just then! There was a light in them he had never seen before, and which seemed to put him beside himself. Was it possible that she loved him? It was a sensation of rapture mixed with a thousand misgivings and apprehensions.

His safety, his peace, had consisted hitherto in the utter hopelessness of the sentiment, the dream, the passion — whichever it was — that he had conceived; but in the light of that moment's wild hope he saw his own poverty, he saw duty, honour, and Mary arrayed before him in despairing distinctness. He was

one of those men who have the love but not the courage of virtue. That he had hitherto felt her to be utterly out of his reach had been almost a satisfaction to him, for he fancied there was neither danger nor guilt in worshipping her at a distance. That could be no injury to her, and no treachery to Mary. But this new hope, this sudden suspicion that she was not indifferent to the homage which his eyes and voice and actions had involuntarily paid her, — was it bliss or was it pain? There she was with that fatal beauty which had so long enthralled him. Ay, he had often before compared her to Italy, and applied to her loveliness that startling epithet. There she was, resting her face on her hand, and bidding him tell her more about his travels, more about M. d'Arberg and himself, and their life at Rome and Venice, their walks on the sea-shore, and their communings by the way, and each time there was a pause recurring to the same subject.

Another person in that room was listening and watching also, —

> "One who had poured her heart's rich treasure forth,
> And been unrepaid for its priceless worth."

Whether Gertrude was consciously or unconsciously stealing away from her the love which had been the sunshine of her life she knew not, and had the virtue not to decide; but the effect was the same. "She is breaking my happiness to pieces," was Mary's feeling;

"perhaps only as a child might destroy a flower of great price which had fallen in its way. My *all* can be to her but the plaything of the hour, and yet she uses it as such, and seems not to know what she is doing. O Maurice, my beloved one! You are not made for trials; you are not fitted for conflicts with the world and your own heart. I might have stood between you and many dangers; but this one nothing that I can do may avert. It is as if you were sinking into a gulf, or falling over a precipice, and I was forced to stand by and see you perish, with my hands tied and my mouth gagged. Could I but make you feel that if you love her she will break your heart!"

Always after Gertrude's visits Maurice was more affectionate than usual to Mary, and there was a refinement in the pain that this gave her. It seemed as if the very source of her happiness was poisoned, for these mute apologies were more grievous to her than unkindness would have been. Yet her manner never betrayed the last irritation; only there was a grave tenderness in her countenance quite different from the beaming look and playful shake of the head with which she had hitherto received his assurances of affection.

The winter passed by and the spring also. Maurice went to London for some months, where he gave lessons and played at concerts with considerable success, but the tone of his letters to Mary was restless

and dissatisfied. It seemed as if he could neither stay at nor away from Stonehouseleigh with any comfort. He complained sometimes that she did not urge him to come back, that she did not write to him often enough. He spoke of his own health in a tone of depression, and of London with abhorrence. Mary's trial increased, for now she hardly knew what was her duty, what was best for him. Any sacrifice she was ready to make, but feared to take any step either backwards or forwards. It seemed to her best to wait and to watch, and Heaven knows there is often more suffering in this than in any decision, but of that she never thought.

In the course of the summer Edgar Lifford came home: he was a handsome and amiable youth, with a great deal of information and a little pedantry. Gertrude — who was very glad of his return — laughed at him, and he did not resent it, but treated her with great condescension, and explained to her many things which he supposed she did not understand. Great pains had been taken with him, and he had had admirable instructors, but the essential part of the intellect was wanting, although he might have been said to have good parts, according to the strict letter of that phrase, for his memory and his aptitude for learning were remarkable. There was nothing he could not, and I had almost said, *did* not commit to memory. He was almost too young to be prosy, but he

promised much in that line, especially if that shocking opinion be correct, that it is not possible to be a thorough-paced bore, without possessing a great deal of information.

Mrs. Lifford loved her son's goodness, his honest face, his civility to every one, and she imagined that his residence at home would be a great advantage and comfort to Gertrude. Mr. Lifford was as fond of his son as he could be of anything, but as he was himself clever in his way — though no one could make less use of his natural gifts — he quickly perceived his son's intellectual deficiencies, and felt an additional irritation at Gertrude's superiority. When, with a few words of lively sarcasm hitting exactly the nail on the head, she overturned the well-set ponderous array of her brother's reasonings, or when he was really in the right managed to make his arguments appear ridiculous, his brow grew darker still than usual, and there was something painful in the looks he cast upon her.

Now that Edgar was old enough to dine with them there was a great deal more conversation at Lifford Grange than was usually the case. That it was lively could scarcely be said, for the two who in different ways might have made it so — that is, Gertrude and her uncle — were the most silent, and Mr. Lifford and his son had it a good deal to themselves. One day a little scene occurred which was

animated, at least, if not lively. Mr. Lifford had been pronouncing himself very strongly against all modern innovations, in which he included the diffusion of education amongst the poor, lodging-houses, wash-houses, and emigration, all of which he declared to have a Socialist and revolutionary tendency. "All this fuss made about the poor at this time is only a species of cant which belongs to the age, and has not an atom of real charity in it."

"True charity," Edgar observed, "consists, in my opinion, in individual exertions, not in combined action. Thus gratitude is awakened in the breasts of the poor, and kindness in those of their superiors."

"But, my dear Edgar, you cannot individually wash the poor, nor can you swim with them on your back to Australia, so that *some* combined action may be useful."

"I own to a great dislike to prospectuses, and lists, and ——"

"Bills of fare," Gertrude maliciously suggested, having observed that her brother studied *that* prospectus every morning with considerable interest.

Mr. Lifford frowned and said, "Printed papers have as seldom any real connexion with good works as pertness has with wit."

"I met the other day in the railway," Edgar said, "a gentleman with whom I had a great deal of con-

versation on philanthropical subjects. I should almost have been inclined to think him a Socialist from some things he said, only that it seemed afterwards that he was quite the reverse. As long as he talked of what the higher classes should do, he seemed to stop at nothing in his requirements; but, on the other hand, he held temporal prosperity for all sorts of persons cheaper than I should be inclined to do, though of course I know that there are things of greater importance. He was a Frenchman, I found, though he spoke English extremely well."

"It was not Adrien d'Arberg, by chance?" Father Lifford inquired.

"That was the name on his portmanteau. He was just come from France."

Gertrude's colour had risen at the sound of the name that interested her so much, and she said quickly, "Did he know who you were?"

"I found he did, and that he had heard of my family and knew how ancient it was, and that we counted kings and crusaders amongst our ancestors."

"How you must have purred when he said that," Gertrude murmured, but not loud enough for her father to hear.

"I did not quite approve of his tone on the subject; he liked old recollections of that kind, he said, and the romance attached to them. It was like the armour that we hang upon our walls, of no real value

in these days, but having a certain charm from association."

"A manufacturer's son, no doubt, a Jeune-France!" Mr. Lifford ejaculated with unspeakable contempt.

"No, he does not belong to that school, and he is a far better man than you would suppose," Father Lifford answered.

"And why in Heaven's name," Gertrude exclaimed to herself, "should one *not* suppose him to be so? But, patience. 'Wisdom is justified of her children.'"

"He has written a clever book enough, which has made a great sensation in France."

"O, an author too! a Frenchman, and an author! From all such Heaven deliver us! I hope, Edgar, that you were not by way of making more than a momentary acquaintance with him. That is the worst of those infernal railways: they expose one to come in contact with all sorts of people."

"O, I took care not to commit myself in any way to his acquaintance, for I could not tell, you know, what his birth or position in society might be. Dear me, Gertrude, how red you are! Are you very hot, dear sister? — Shall I open the window?"

All the open windows in the world would not have cooled Gertrude's cheeks at that moment, or restrained her from breaking forth. "I pity you, brother, if you could not discern in that man's ap-

pearance a surer patent of true nobility than lies in parchments and escutcheons, and a greater honour in having had an hour's conversation with him, than in descending from crusaders and Spanish grandees."

There was an awful pause after this sentence. The sneer at the "Grands d'Espagne" had particularly nettled Father Lifford, who was more than half a Spaniard in his feelings. Edgar was exceedingly puzzled — both at the extreme impropriety of his sister's sentiments, and at her warmth on the subject — as well he might be, not knowing that she had ever seen d'Arberg, or that she was acquainted with his works.

"Really, sister," he began, but his father interrupted him. "Pray do not attempt to reason with Gertrude; since her love of contradiction and perversity of feeling is getting to the point of putting herself in a passion, and insulting us all about a perfect stranger in whom she can take no interest, but on account of his probable low birth and his sneers at what we value and respect, the more we leave her to herself the better; only I do not choose to hear such words uttered again before me; and therefore, Miss Lifford, whatever your degrading sentiments may be, take care that you never let *me* hear them again."

Gertrude had been much to blame, she knew and she felt it, and her irritation had vanished; but a dull aching at her heart succeeded it. When they all left

the table she went to the window, and laid her forehead against the glass. Her father and her brother had left the room, and her uncle was following them; but when he got near the door he turned round to look at her. She also turned at that moment, and rushing to him with impetuosity, threw herself into his arms. He did not repulse her, but said, "Pshaw, don't make a scene; you are a bad incorrigible girl." But the manner was not harsh as the words.

"O Father Lifford," she exclaimed, "I have been so wrong. I have behaved ill to you, — you who have been so kind to me!"

"Never mind that; you should grieve at having displeased your father."

"I *cannot*. *You* — *you* I am sorry to have offended, and if you would let me, I would kneel to ask your pardon."

"No, no, Gertrude, not here. It is not *thus* or *here* that you must sue for pardon; remember your father's must be asked, and that not in outward form alone, but with a humbled heart and a penitent spirit. God bless you, my child!" he added, for he saw the resolution was made, and the proud spirit conquered.

CHAPTER XI.

"I looked, and looked, and still with new delight
Such joy my soul, such pleasure filled my sight;
Nor sullen discontent, nor anxious care,
Even though brought hither could inhabit there,
But thence they fled as from their mortal foe,
For this sweet place could only pleasure know."

DRYDEN.

"About me round I saw
Hill, dale, and shady woods, and sunny places,
And liquid lapse of murm'ring streams; by these
Creatures that lived and moved, and walked or flew,
Birds on the branches warbling; all things smiled;
With fragrance and with joy my heart o'erflowed."

FAYRYE QUEEN.

EDGAR observed that his sister was looking somewhat pale and out of spirits, and his good-natured disposition attributing it partly to the scene which had taken place, and of which he had unintentionally been the cause, he set about thinking on some mode of pleasing and amusing her. Having heard her express one day a great wish to ride, he now endeavoured to find out some means of giving her this pleasure.

"Would you not like to ride, Gertrude," he said to her one morning. "Would not the exercise be beneficial to your health?"

"I don't know what it would do to my health, dear old boy, but I know it would be of use to my

temper, — it would shake a great deal of malice out of me."

"Would you be afraid to ride my horse?"

"I would ride anything, a cow, a stag, a crow, or an eagle."

"If so, I will borrow the gamekeeper's pony for myself, and you can ride Conqueror. I must see about the side-saddle, and you must get something of a habit."

"I don't know what I can do about that. Perhaps I might wear mamma's, which has been put by for so many years. Do you think its old-fashioned shape and embroidered facings will signify?"

"O dear no. I have no doubt it will look very well, and we will go towards the open country, where we shall probably not meet any one. You will like, perhaps, to see a large encampment of gipseys on Oakley Common?"

"O, of all things; I delight in their picturesque faces. What a dear boy you are, Edgar, to have thought of my riding. I will copy the *tree* for you this evening, and not say anything disrespectful about it."

"I hope you will not for your own sake, Gertrude, and I am much obliged to you for the promise."

Then they parted, and both were successful in their researches.

At five o'clock, for the day had been very warm and they did not start till then, Gertrude appeared on the steps in her picturesque attire, and sprang lightly on the horse, which appeared at first rather uneasy at the flapping of her riding-habit, but went pretty quietly after a few minutes. She was delighted at finding herself on horseback, and when they got into a green valley, a little beyond the park, she set off at a quick canter till the ground grew broken and uneven, and then they proceeded at a foot-pace through a narrow ravine, and by the side of a rapid stream. She was silent, for her enjoyment lay in thoughts that it would never have occurred to her to communicate to Edgar; only now and then she said, "How pleasant this is!" or, "How fine it is to-day!" He stopped sometimes to gather branches of honeysuckle or white convolvuluses, and handed them to her, discoursing the while on botany, geology, and various branches of natural history, and telling her the names of every bird and insect they saw on bush or hedgerow. She thanked him for the flowers, and listened with apparent interest to the comments, but her thoughts were often far away.

"There is a lady-bird," he said, as one of those little creatures settled on his horse's mane.

"Ay, a lady-bird," she exclaimed, roused from her abstraction; "my namesake! Do not you remember? —

it is the name that Maurice Redmond and Mary Grey have always given me."

"But I hope they don't do so now, Gertrude; it would be very familiar."

"I wonder," she said to herself, "that he does not add — 'and familiarity breeds contempt.'" But without answering him, she held out her hand and made the little insect come upon it, and gazed upon it earnestly, while she murmured to herself in a low voice the pretty nursery rhyme —

"O lady-bird, lady-bird, fly away home,
The squirrel and field-mouse have gone to their rest,
The daisies have shut up their sleepy red eyes,
The bees and the insects and birds are at rest.
O lady-bird, lady-bird, fly away home,
The glow-worm is lighting his glittering lamp,
The dew 's falling fast, and your fine speckled wings
Will be moistened and wet with the close clinging damp.
O lady-bird, lady-bird, fly away home,
The sweet little fairy bells tinkle afar;
Make haste, or they 'll catch you and harness you fast
With a gossamer cobweb to Oberon's car."

As she ended her song the little creature, that had been for awhile so motionless that it scarce seemed alive, suddenly expanded its hitherto invisible wings, and flew away in an instant.

"Ah, so I too shall fly away some day, to your great surprise," she said, turning to Edgar; "I must see something of the world before I die."

"I hope you will be well married in a year or two,

sister, and then I dare say you will persuade your husband to take you a tour abroad."

"Unless I am married by proxy — like some of the great people we descend from — I do not see the individual who is to have the honour of my hand."

"My father will look to that."

"He may look, but he will not see. Besides, it is my business — not his."

"I cannot admit that, Gertrude; nothing concerns a father more than the marriage of his children, and the alliances of his family."

"Of his sons, certainly," she answered, with an affected gravity; "I would not have you, my dear brother, swerve an inch from that conviction or think of choosing a wife for yourself — not even if you were to meet with an angel from Heaven — if she could not prove sixteen quarterings, or had not had well-attested grandfathers on grandfathers. I feel that on you will rest all the responsibility of the family greatness, and I am sure you will not shrink from any choice that will be made for you, be she ever so ugly, if her ancestors are all right."

"I think virtue is the first thing in a wife, but next to that, I own that I attach more importance to family descent than to personal beauty."

"O my dear Edgar, how absurd you are! Do not be angry." But there was no occasion for this appeal, for Edgar had the best of tempers, and the happiest

conviction that he was always right; so that nothing ever ruffled or disturbed him.

After a ride of some length, and mounting a while, they arrived at a wooded eminence near the downs, which commanded a magnificent view. The stream, which had been compressed within its banks in the narrow valley, expanded into a river in the plain; the hills, overhung with wood, threw broad shadows on the waving corn-fields. The declining sun gilded the rich foliage with its evening light, and odours rose in balmy sweetness from the clover on the one side, and the wild thyme on the other. Edgar, who always was more intent on little matters of detail than on the general beauty of a scene, and whose favourite pursuit just then was entomology, espied a singular insect flying under some trees a little way beneath them. He got off his horse, and tying the bridle to a tree, ran after it amongst the bushes where he had seen it disappear. Gertrude sat negligently on her saddle in delighted contemplation of the scene before her. She let the reins hang on her horse's neck, and allowed him to crop the short grass at his feet.

At that moment a gun went off in a neighbouring field, startling a covey of partridges, and frightening both the horses, which set off at full gallop. Edgar's broke away from the bush where it was loosely fastened, and rushed past the spot where he was still looking for his insect. He ran after it down the hill, and it

was some time before he caught it. When he returned to the spot where he had left Gertrude she had disappeared. He called to her as loudly as he could, but no answer came. Then pushing on his horse, he looked about the downs in every direction and could not see her. In serious alarm he rode on, but unfortunately in the opposite direction to that which her horse had taken. It had started off at the same moment as his; she kept her seat and seized the reins, but beginning to pull at its mouth with all her might, it stuck its head down, and got entirely beyond her control. She was soon out of sight of the spot from whence she had started, and began to feel sick and giddy with the pace at which they were going. She felt herself rushing up and down hill, and over some ditches and through some fences, and then across a road, and again for what appeared to her an interminable time along the open downs, and at last through a gate into what seemed to be a park; there the horse came suddenly to a stop: this threw her off her balance, and she fell on the grass. It was soft and she would not have been much hurt if her foot had not been under her, and in this way severely sprained her ankle. She felt a little stunned, but endeavoured to get up and to walk a few steps, but pain compelled her to sit down again, with her back against a hay-stack, which she now saw was the obstacle that had checked the speed of her horse.

It was getting late, and the night was waning fast; she could discern nothing but trees, and heard no sounds but the cawing of rooks. All sorts of ideas began to pass through her mind, — if nobody passed that way what would become of her that night? Once more she tried to walk, but now she could not even put her foot to the ground. Then she called out as loud as she could, and the rooks seemed to caw louder in answer, but nothing else responded. Then something rattled in the hedge behind her, and she held in her breath with affright. Her foot began to swell very much, and she grew faint with the pain. By degrees her thoughts became less clear, and almost assumed the character of dreams; but still they turned upon her present position, and the vague fears it inspired.

Would she die if she remained there all the night? It was a summer evening, and the sky over her head was clear, and the stars beginning to shine one by one; but the air felt very cold, and the grass was damp. If she should have a dangerous illness, would her father grieve for her, and would her mother have strength to come to her bedside, and give her a kiss as she used to do when she was a little child? Would Father Lifford weep if her life were despaired of, or was he a man who never shed tears? She kept asking herself these questions over and over again, and fancying how everybody would look and what they would

say at Lifford Grange, if she *were* brought back *dead.* How strange it would be! The chapel would be hung with black, and candles would be lit on the altar, and the "De profundis" would be sung. Then she mechanically repeated over and over again,

> "Eternal rest give unto her, O Lord,
> And let perpetual light shine upon her.
> May she rest in peace!"

Then she ceased to think, but dreamed that she was in her coffin, and that it was being slowly lifted up and carried along. Was she going to Heaven? No, it could not be Heaven, for she was so sensible of suffering great pain. It was purgatory, perhaps. Then everything grew indistinct and confused, and a sense of repose stole over her. But she could not move nor speak.

Then she heard the sound of voices and of footsteps about her, and she felt herself talking at random, and heard some one say that she was light-headed. Then later somebody came in and felt her pulse and her forehead, and a glass was held to her lips. Some hours afterwards she awoke, and looked about her with astonishment. She saw nothing but snowy white muslin curtains, and opposite to her a marble chimney-piece, and upon it a transparent night lamp, with a kneeling figure of a woman in a church, the light shining through the mimic Gothic windows. Her feverish hands were resting on a pink silk eider-

down quilt, and her flushed cheek on a pillow fringed with lace. She saw all this, but felt too weak to wonder at it, and closed her eyes and went to sleep again. The next time she opened them daylight was shining through the chinks of the shutters. She heard some one talking in the next room, and supposed she was still dreaming; but soon the speaker came in, a pretty well-dressed person, and bending over her she said, "Do not be frightened, Miss Lifford, at finding yourself in a strange place. This is Mr. and Lady Clara Audley's house. You were brought here last night after your fall from your horse. For some time we did not know who you were; but the doctor, when he came, recognised you immediately. A message was sent to your parents to let them know that you were safe, and Lady Clara is anxious that you should feel yourself quite comfortable. I am her maid, Miss Lifford. I hope you find yourself pretty well this morning."

"Yes, thank you," Gertrude answered, and without quite knowing why, could scarcely keep the tears from rolling down her cheeks. "How came I here?" she asked with a bewildered expression. "What happened to me last night? You said I fell from my horse. Where was I found? I was stunned, I suppose?"

"You were found lying near a haystack in the park, Miss Lifford; you had fainted right away, and

one of the gentlemen carried you here; it was some time before you came to yourself."

"I scarcely feel even now, as if I had," she ejaculated. "Everything seems so strange. Will you thank Lady Clara for her kindness? I suppose somebody will soon come from my home."

There was a nervous sensation in her throat as she said those last words. She felt very lonely, and partly from physical weakness, partly from the strangeness of her position, she found it difficult not to give way to her emotion.

When the maid left the room she clasped her hands together, and hiding her face in the pillow, murmured, "Nobody loves me — nobody cares for me — I might have died last night, and nobody would have been sorry except poor mamma." Such were her thoughts, not very logical or reasonable ones, certainly, but springing nevertheless from a sense that she had never been watched over or cherished in her home; and how often it happens that in illness or loneliness the long kept-down emotion, the long standing heart-ache, the sense of an injury long forgiven and all but forgotten, will sometimes start up with all the vehemence of former days, and the trifle as light as air — which at other moments might only have excited a smile — will in those hours of weakness call forth a burst of feeling which shakes to pieces the barrier with which the soul had fenced itself round,

and imprisoned till it had subdued its own impetuosity. Sometimes that calmness is the result of heroic virtue, sometimes of the force of habitual endurance, and sometimes again of an odd sort of levity, a recklessness of the same nature as that which will make some children (boys especially) utterly heedless of physical pain, and will let them play and exert themselves as usual with a dislocated limb or a festering wound; in any of these cases momentary reactions may take place, but the effects will often be different. Through them the spirit may descend a step towards evil, or it may but grasp more firmly the hand held out to it from heaven.

The next time that Mrs. Martin, the good-natured ladies' maid, came in, it was to bring Gertrude her breakfast, served in beautiful Sèvres china, on a small silver tray. She opened the shutters, to let light into the room. Gertrude asked her to throw open the window also; and rising in bed, she looked upon such an enchanting scene as had never yet met her sight. The place was one well known to her by name, for it was famous for its natural beauties, and for all that art had done for it. The house stood in a commanding position on the brow of a hill, backed by a magnificent bank of wood, and from it the eye rested on a succession of terraces, each forming a gorgeous flower-garden, now in all the glory of summer just verging upon autumn. Large dazzling

masses of the scarlet geranium faced the deep blue beds of the salvia or the gentian. The heliotrope and the variegated verbenas, the stately hollyhocks and the graceful fuchsias, the dahlias like court beauties in their pompous array, the tall white lilies, standing alone in their majestic purity, were all there in clusters, or in rows. The passion flower, the jessamine, and the convolvulus covered the walls which stretched from one end of each terrace to the other. Red roses in marble vases adorned every flight of steps, and in the centre of each division of this flowery mosaic, on every story of this sloping garden, a fountain played, which high and clear into the morning air shot up sheets of pure water, or clouds of glittering spray, through which the sun shed its rays on this scene of enchantment.

The last of these terraces overhung the river Leigh, which broadening into a lake at this period of its course, reflected on that morning the azure of a cloudless sky, and then immediately narrowed again, as if on purpose to show off its silvery windings through the green valley of Arkleigh. A little skiff was lying at anchor, near the stone steps of the landing-place, its white sail gleaming in the sunlight, and its streamers gently fluttering in the breeze. The banks of wood which reached to the edge of the water, on the other side of the stream, were just beginning to display their rich autumnal hues. The foliage of

the copper beech, the coral berries of the mountain ash, and the red leaves of the Virginian creeper, stood out in contrast with the masses of summer's richest green. There was a brightness, a brilliancy, a gaiety in this view which no description can convey. The statues placed amongst the flowers, or presiding over the fountains, were all in some graceful or joyous attitude. Either they seemed to play with the large leaves of the lotus, or to throw up into the air, in mimic sport, the water that fell back in sparkling showers on their marble shoulders, or they seemed to bow their graceful heads under the rays of the sun, and to inhale sweet odours from the glowing masses of flowers which surrounded them.

A part of the park was also visible from the window: — the deer starting from the midst of the tall fern, the cattle standing contemplatively by the brink of the river, the Gothic towers of an old church appearing in the distance, and the blue hills of Westmoreland forming a background to the picture. It was a view not to weary of, and the inside of Gertrude's room corresponded with the beauty without. It was furnished with a magnificence that would hardly perhaps have been in good taste if there had not been something poetical in its smallest details. Each piece of furniture, each picture, each bit of carving, the mirrors, the carpet, the writing-table, the stools, the luxurious arm-chairs, the patterns of the curtains,

the mouldings of the cornice, all suggested to the mind something pleasing in Nature or in art. Flowers, birds, children's laughing faces, ivy wreaths and clustering grapes, sunny landscapes and graceful figures, appeared at every turn, and as Gertrude closed her eyes for a moment and thought of Lifford Grange, it seemed to her that she must have dreamed of the scenes just described, or else been transported to one of those fairy abodes which she had so often pictured to herself in her childhood.

At that moment she caught sight of a well-known figure on a rough stout pony, making its way towards the house, looking ill suited to the brilliant scene around him, but more welcome to her just then, than all its beauties put together. Father Lifford — for it was he — was looking paler than usual; not one glance did he bestow on the fine scenery he was passing through. His black coat was wet with the morning dew, and his hair seemed more grey than the day before. He had suffered very much, from the time when Edgar had returned home without his sister, and alarmed the house for her safety. At first, he did not so much think of an accident, as that the child had done something strange. He loved her more than he was aware of, but had never felt easy about her, and he now shuddered as he remembered her weariness of home — her pining for change — her strange questions and her odd fancies.

When her horse was brought home late at night, having been found in a field by some labourers, his anxiety grew intense, and he had never found it so difficult to be calm. Men were sent to seek for her in every direction, and it was only with his head buried in his hands, in incessant prayer before the altar, that he could command his feelings. When the news of her safety arrived, his only thought was to go to her. There were reasons that made him hate entering the walls of Audley House, but they were all swallowed up in the determination to see the child, and ascertain for himself that she was not seriously hurt; and leaving orders for her maid to follow him, he never rested till he stood by her bedside.

She held out her hands to him, while the tears chased each other down her cheek. "A pretty business this," he growled out, "a mighty pretty business, to have you laid up here in this new-fangled place, with nothing and nobody that is not strange to us about you;" and he held her hand and stroked it gently, while she could hardly forbear a smile at his entire want of appreciation of the beauty and the comfort which were apparent in the smallest details, as well as in the general aspect of her present abode.

"And what is to happen, child? They tell me that you cannot walk, and that the doctor will not let you be moved. This is sad work indeed!"

"Lady Clara says that I must stay here, and —"

"And what business has she to say anything about it?"

"I mean that she says I *may* stay here, and indeed my foot hurts me so much at the least motion that I do not think I could stir."

"Then you shall not stir. Why do you move about? Can't you be quiet? So you must stay here, I suppose."

"Is papa angry with me? Was he at all anxious last night?"

"Why, you don't suppose we were any of us very comfortable, do you?"

"Poor mamma! I thought of her, as long as I could think of anything."

"Well, there was some grace in that. But we did not tell her anything till we knew where you were."

"And Edgar?"

"O the boy! He cried, but he ate some supper." Gertrude smiled, and laid her hand on the old man's sleeve.

"Father Lifford, I believe you love me, though you never say so."

"Nonsense. I love everybody, it is my duty."

"Well, I don't think you love Lady Clara Audley," she maliciously replied, for with her needle-like penetration she had long ago perceived that the mistress of Audley House for some unknown reason was his favourite aversion. She had not indeed seen them

together, but the mere sound of her name was at any time sufficient to discompose him.

"Lady Fiddlestick!" he answered impatiently, "I wish her well, but —" at that moment there was a gentle knock at the door.

"Here she is, I am sure," Gertrude whispered.

"Ah well, I 'll go now, child, and come back again another time. Is there another door?" he ejaculated with a look of real distress, but while he was desperately endeavouring to get out at one door and entangling himself in the embroidered curtains of its portières, the enemy entered through the other, and cut off his retreat.

This enemy was about thirty-eight, but looked younger — at least not many women of thirty-eight retain as much beauty — such a smooth fair skin, such glossy hair, and such youthful delicacy of feature. There was something that reminded one of feudal times in her appearance. Something grave, dignified, and almost majestic, though combined with a particularly feminine grace. Her eyes were hazel and rather prominent, her hair auburn, and her lips somewhat thick, though not too much so for beauty. She was dressed in a black velvet gown with wide hanging sleeves, a guipure shawl hung over her shoulders, and a lace cap was fastened by two diamond pins to the thick tresses of her hair. She bent over Gertrude, rapidly said some kind things to her, and then turning to

Father Lifford bowed to him most graciously, and murmured something about not having met for a long time. He bowed in return, gravely and coldly, but with perfect civility; for with all his bluntness he was invariably well bred. She then inquired after Gertrude's parents in a kind of half compassionate half mysterious tone, which seemed to annoy him, and he answered the question briefly and abruptly. To her expressions of delight at having the opportunity of seeing Gertrude in her house, and her hopes that she would remain till perfectly recovered from her accident, "that they would not deprive her of the wounded bird that had nestled under her wing," he responded as if poisoned honey had been distilled into his ears, and said that his nephew and Mrs. Lifford would doubtless much regret the trouble which their daughter's accident had occasioned; but though the words were civil, there was something so chilling and formal in the tone which accompanied them, that Lady Clara, who observed it, said:

"Time often perpetuates estrangements between those who once were friends, but I entreat you to tell Mr. Lifford that his daughter cannot be a stranger here, and that if he will trust me with his treasure, I will cherish it as I would my own, had Heaven granted me one."

A still graver and colder bow was the Father's only reply and he withdrew after giving Gertrude his

blessing, and promising to send over some things which she wanted from home.

And now the lady of the enchanted castle and her young guest remained alone together. Lady Clara fitted well that abode. She had created it chiefly herself, and it seemed in every part of it to bear the impress of her mind and tastes. She had been, from the day of her birth, "a lady nursed in pomp and pleasure;" but not in vulgar pomp or in senseless pleasure. Nature had given her a sweet temper, a love of the beautiful, and a kind and noble spirit. Education had added delicacy, grace, and refinement of manners. Nothing mean or vicious had approached her. She had neither suffered, struggled, nor sinned, as the world considers it, and she was the *chef d'œuvre* of what a happy disposition, the best kind of worldly education, and earthly safeguards from temptation can effect. With a slight alteration she could be well described in the words of a living poet:

"She floated o'er life like a noontide breeze
Or cradled vapour on sunny seas,
Or an exquisite cloud in light arrayed,
Which sails through the sky, and can throw no shade;
She cared for no sympathy — living in throngs
Of her own sunny thoughts and her mute inward songs.
She was chaste as the white lily's dew-beaded cup,
Which bold — because stainless — to heaven looks up.
Her mind was a fair desert temple of beauty,
Unshaded by sorrow, unhallowed by duty."

When just passing from early girlhood into womanhood, beautiful as a poet's dream, as a painter's ideal,

she had appeared to the young owner of Lifford Grange. He saw her at a county ball; he was invited to meet her at a neighbouring country-house and then to her father's house; he fell desperately in love with her. It was one of those violent absorbing passions that make wild havoc in a man's heart. He was handsome and clever: she was pleased with him, and without hesitation accepted him when he proposed to her. Her parents, though they disliked the marriage, never thwarted their idol, and all of them went to London together, and Lady Clara was engaged to Henry Lifford. But jealous, tyrannical, and proud — he soon alienated from him the inclination which the beautiful spoilt child had felt for him. The outbreaks of his fierce passion disquieted and alarmed her. Gentle, refined, and pure, caring more for the charm and the sentiment of a mutual affection than for the kind of love which made him at one moment adore and at another reproach her, she broke off her engagement as unhesitatingly as she had entered into it, and without a struggle or a regret — as she would have thrown aside a nosegay in which a thorn had stung her — she dismissed him at once, and went on her way as free, as happy, and as calm as if he had never crossed her path.

He went almost mad with anger and despair; and then the pride which was in him as strong as life itself enabled him to subdue at once all outward expres-

sion of love, or of regret: but, like an extinguished volcano, which has consumed every trace of vegetation and leaves behind it barren and unsightly ruins, the flame thus suddenly extinguished seemed to have burned out of his heart every trace of gentle feeling and affection. He went almost immediately to Spain, and there married the beautiful Angustia, but no sooner was the ceremony performed than he felt himself undone; and the cold admiration — if even such a term as that be not too strong — or rather the assent he had given to the general opinion of her beauty, changed into a feeling of aversion, which he took little pains to conceal.

When they returned to England Lady Clara had married Mr. Audley, the owner of a large property about twelve miles distant from Mr. Lifford's place, and they generally stayed there during a part of the year. He neither would see nor appear to avoid her — and a total seclusion from the world was the alternative he chose. He would hardly ride out of his own grounds for fear of meeting her. Once in the course of sixteen years he did so, and then the deadly paleness of his cheek, and the expression of his eyes, left it in doubt by which of the two aforesaid passions his spirit was swayed. She, the while, went along the stream of life with "youth at the prow and pleasure at the helm." The person she had married was young, good-looking, and amiable. She loved him

enough and not too much for her happiness — enough to make life agreeable in his society, not too much to give her any of the heartaches which are almost invariably attached to an absorbing affection.

It was impossible to see her and hear her talk, at times, without feeling that there was in her nature a power of loving which had not been called into full exercise. She had never had any children, and had not felt the want of them: to those who surrounded her she stood almost in the light of a child herself, although her disposition was not in reality childish; but she lived in an atmosphere of beauty and luxury, of refinement and amusement, which supplied the place of the graver cares and duties of life. In the love of Nature and of art, in transient but not contemptible attempts at literary composition, in intercourse with men of genius, in the creation of the earthly, intellectual, and poetical paradise which surrounded her — she expended the sensibility and the energy which had not been otherwise called into play. Study, reading, and society furnished her with occupation, and a succession of pursuits and of fancies — generally harmless, and discarded as soon as they became wearisome — filled up her time. Such was Lady Clara Audley's existence; it had transcended the ordinary course of human prosperity. That she was a happy person some will not need to be told, while others may remain in doubt, according to the view they may take or the

theories they may have on the subject of happiness. It had been a matter of curious speculation to her to wonder over the strange mode of life which had been adopted by her first lover and his Spanish wife. She sometimes reflected — now that it was long past and had become merely a page in the history of her youth — on the sort of passion he had felt for her; and though she fervently rejoiced at having escaped such a marriage, yet she seldom looked on the gates of Lifford Grange without an odd sensation of curiosity and interest. It was therefore no common excitement to her when chance brought into her house Henry Lifford's daughter, of whose beauty she had often heard from Mark Apley and others.

After a few preliminary sentences of thanks on the one side and kind answers on the other, Lady Clara looked fixedly at Gertrude, and said: "You are like your father, I think, — but I suppose you have your mother's Spanish eyes."

"You have seen him, then?"

"Years ago, when we were both young."

"Was he ever young? I cannot fancy him different from what I have always known him; but I can well imagine I may be like him: I feel it sometimes."

Lady Clara laughed. "What an odd thing to *feel*." Then, seeing her eyes turned towards the window, she said:

"You seem to like my garden. Have you a passion for flowers, as I have?"

"For some, but I hate others; a tiger-lily, for instance, and every sort of calceolaria."

"I believe you are right, and that it is as foolish to ask that general question as those other ones — do you like children, or do you like dogs? Somebody said one might just as well say: 'Do you like people?' What can be more different than a pæony or a rose?"

"Nothing," Gertrude answered with a slow smile, "except some faces I have seen, and —" she hesitated.

"What were you going to say?"

"Oh, I was thinking of Mrs. Apley's and of yours." Lady Clara laughed, for the comparison was very apposite.

"Yes, you put me in mind the first instant I saw you of the moss-rose, the fairest and most richly-dressed of flowers."

"Ah, you have read the pretty German fable on that subject?"

"Not in German, but Maurice Redmond translated it for me, and set it to music."

"What, my handsome young music-master? Is he a poet also? Can you repeat to me the English lines?"

"I hardly know if I can remember them; but I think they run thus:

"Weary of pleasure,
And laden with treasure,
The Angel of flowers
Had wandered for hours,
When he sunk to his rest
With his wings on his breast,
And the rose of the glade
Lent her beautiful shade
To guard and to cover
The flower-king's slumber.
When the angel awoke,
Then in rapture he spoke:
'Thou queen of my bowers,
Thou fairest of flowers,
What gift shall be mine,
And what guerdon be thine?'
'In guerdon of duty
Bestow some new beauty,'
She said, and then smiled
Like a mischievous child.
In anger he started,
But ere he departed,
To rebuke the vain flower
In the pride of her power,
He flung some rude moss
Her fair bosom across;
But her new robes of green
So became the fair queen,
That the Angel of flowers
Mistrusted his powers,
And was heard to declare
He had granted her prayer." *

"I should like to have a statue made on that subject," Lady Clara observed. "The angel of flowers hurling the moss at the vain rose; and then, we might place it in the centre of a bower of pink and white moss-roses; — Would it not be charming? I will not

* From the German of Krummacher.

ask you if you like statues, for I suppose you have not seen many yet, but I feel sure that you like everything beautiful and poetical, or else your eyes belie you. Tell me, is it true that you are called Lady-Bird in the village of Stonehouseleigh?"

"Yes; I believe I am well-known there by that name."

"O then it is so; I was once waiting in the pony-chaise, at the door of a cottage, and some little brat called out — 'there goes Lady-Bird.' I called him, and asked whom he meant; he would only repeat 'Lady-Bird' — then his mother came forward, and said he meant Miss Lifford. I was so provoked at not having seen you, for I had long wished to do so. But that name takes my fancy strangely. There is something old-fashioned in it, and I like everything quaint and original, — old books, old names, old curtains, and old houses. The present is so dull, compared with the past."

Gertrude looked round the room, then pointed to the window and said, "If Audley Park is the *present* and Lifford Grange the *past*, I cannot agree with you, Lady Clara."

The latter smiled at the unconscious allusion contained in Gertrude's words, and said, "I have erected this place myself, schemed, planned it, and seen it rise before my eyes. It has been like writing a poem, but

now that it is finished it wearies me to be always reading it over again."

"I should like one day to hold such a pen as that in my hand, but to read your poem is for the present enough pleasure. Speaking to a stranger is an event in my life."

"And yet you to me are not shy, my pretty Lady-Bird."

"I have no idea how to converse. I wonder that I learnt to talk at all."

"I imagine that that talent is intuitive, my love, and that the less art there is in it the better."

"Do you think I am *artless*, Lady Clara?"

"Why I can hardly judge of that yet. The perfection of art is to appear not to have any."

"O then I think you must be very artful."

"A compliment, Lady-Bird!"

"O no; I talk of you just as I would of the flowers in the garden. I say what comes into my head, and if it is flattering, it is more fortunate for me than for you."

"Do you know that you amuse me very much. I hope they will let you stay with me some time. I could not gather anything from Father Lifford's manner; does he always seem so stern?"

"He is not given to the smiling mood, certainly; but I cannot disguise from you, Lady Clara, that he looks less benignantly upon you than on the rest of

man or womankind. Did you know *him* in his youth also?"

"My dear child, he must have been near forty when I was born!"

"Then why does he look as black as thunder when you are mentioned? What can you have done to him?"

Lady Clara looked pensive an instant, then said, "If we can but keep you here, your convalescence will be the pleasantest thing in the world. We shall carry you gently down stairs, and make you lie on the sofa in the conservatory, amongst the camellias and orange-trees; then you shall drive slowly through the rosery in a garden-chair, and a little later sail on the river in our little skiff, and everybody here shall pay you their court. There are numbers of people in the house longing to see you: my cousin, Lady Roslyn, all the Apleys, Mr. and Mrs. Crofton, and Adrien d'Arberg, — and Maurice, as you call our young musician, is coming on Thursday."

"Is M. d'Arberg here?" Gertrude asked, with a look of sudden interest, which did not escape Lady Clara's attention.

"Yes. Are you acquainted with him?"

"I can hardly say I am; and yet, I feel to know him well, for I have read his books."

"I think you will be as much struck with his appearance as with his writings. I have met with but

few men as handsome, and with none who possessed the same charm of countenance and manner."

"I have seen him once," Gertrude quietly remarked, and then changed the conversation by asking some questions about a view of Tivoli, which hung over the chimney.

It was enough for her to hear that she would see him again. She was secreting that happiness in her heart, and did not feel inclined to talk about it then. Lady Clara explained the position of the waterfalls, and said, as she rose to go,

"To-day, the doctor enjoins perfect repose; nothing but short dull visits from me, but to-morrow, I trust, his rigour will be abated; and that my Lady-Bird's receptions will commence. Somebody said that an invalid to visit was an indispensable addition to the enjoyment of a party in a country-house. Imagine what a resource you will be to my guests, who having been here a week, were actually beginning to talk of charades and tableaux, and worst of all, of *jeux d'esprit;*" and with a kiss, Lady Clara took leave of Gertrude for the moment.

She remained with her cheek on the embroidered pillow, her eyes sparkling with excitement, her hands playing with her rings, and only one fear standing between her and the rapture of anticipation that was beating in her heart. She had misgivings that her father would at almost any risk order her home, as

soon as she could leave her bed; and had she known his feelings about Audley Park and its mistress, she might have feared it still more. She saw herself carried away from this scene of enchantment, and now of deep interest, restored to the dull room which she had so often wished to leave, and which no agreeable associations endeared to her. It was an alternative between so much enjoyment, and so much disappointment that she could hardly remain quiet in that state of suspense, and would have probably grown very feverish in the course of the day, if her maid had not arrived with the things she had sent for, and news from home.

It appeared that by that morning's post there had arrived some intelligence from Spain which imperatively called for Mr. Lifford's presence there to assert his wife's right to an inheritance which had unexpectedly devolved on her. He had made instant preparations for departure, and was to set off in the evening, and to take Edgar with him.

"And what did he say about me, Jane? Did you hear anything from mamma, or Father Lifford?"

"Only Isabella told me while I was packing up the things, that your mamma was surprised your papa had not said one word on the subject, and that she had not mentioned it to him. But of course, Miss, you are not to move till the doctor says you may, and Father Lifford, no doubt, will send the carriage to

fetch you when the time comes: so you need not fret about it."

"I suppose papa will be absent for some time?"

"Two months, I heard it said, at the least." Then Gertrude was silent, and tolerably contented. She should probably stay where she was for a few days at least, and she did not despair of obtaining her mother's permission to pay another visit to Audley Park before her father's return.

In the afternoon Edgar came to see her, and made Mr. Lifford's excuses to Mr. Audley, *not* to Lady Clara, for the trouble that Gertrude occasioned in his house, and his apologies that his own sudden departure for Spain prevented him from calling to acknowledge in person their kindness to her. Mr. Audley, who had taken very little cognizance of the whole affair, was quite puzzled to find himself made so prominent in it, but he was very gracious and civil, and was sure it was a great pleasure to Lady Clara, and hoped Miss Lifford would stay with them as long as possible, and all sorts of kind expressions; and then Edgar met his father at the station, and nothing passed between them beyond a brief question whether Gertrude was going on well, with the affirmative answer, — which was received without comment; and both were that night in London, and embarked the next day for Spain. It was Mr. Lifford's pride that had forced him to a piece of civility which cost him a great deal, but which he

was too well-bred to omit: but it seemed to him as if Gertrude was destined to be a perpetual source of annoyance, and that chance had now connected her with the plague spot which had been so long festering in his heart.

Gertrude wrote little gay affectionate notes to her mother, in which she spoke of her enjoyment of the change of scene which her accident had so unexpectedly procured her — of Lady Clara's great kindness, and wish to keep her as long as possible; but she added that as soon as she could, she must go home, and show her that she was well again — and that in the meantime, she would write every day. With something between a smile and a sigh, Mrs. Lifford gave these notes to her uncle, who took snuff, "pshawed," and said, "Foolish people, all of you." Whom he exactly included in that general condemnation was not quite apparent, but Mrs. Lifford found safety in the number, and satisfied herself that at all events he did not blame her more severely than the rest, whoever they might be whom he so vaguely designated.

CHAPTER XII.

"Whence and what are we, to what end ordained?
What means the drama by this world sustained?
Business or vain amusements, care or mirth,
Divide the frail inhabitants of earth.
Is duty a mere sport, or an employ?
Life an entrusted talent, or a toy?"

COWPER.

On the third day after Gertrude's accident, Lady Clara was sitting writing letters in her morning-room, which opened on one side on a conservatory which formed a kind of drawing-room, and on the other on a library where several of her guests were assembled. The three Miss Apleys were sitting round a table, one of them occupied with some abstruse embroidery, another with a design for a flower-garden, and the third, Harriet, alias Cherry, with a music-book, into which she was copying German waltzes. Mrs. Crofton and Mrs. Apley were reading the newspapers near the window, several men were lounging about the room, and the sound of billiard-balls in the one beyond it indicated that others were killing time in a somewhat more active manner.

"Harriet," said Mrs. Crofton, "have you been to Miss Lifford, yet?"

"O yes, I went up to her room last night, after dinner; she is looking prettier than ever."

"O, do you think so, Harriet?" exclaimed Fanny, the next sister, "I was disappointed with her. Have you never observed that her teeth are not quite even?"

"I never knew any one like you, Fanny, for detecting faults," said Mark Apley, who was picking off the leaves of a tall geranium that was apparently growing out of the middle of an ottoman, on which he was stretched out nearly at full length. "If there is a spot, a blot, a flaw in anything, you are sure to pounce upon it. Now, Cherry likes to admire, and I think she is right."

Fanny put down her pen, for she was the copier of music; and going up to him, said something in a low voice which made him laugh and colour, and say, but not angrily, "Leave me alone, don't spoil the button of my coat. Come and look at them playing at billiards."

"No, I will not! your friend Adrien is conceited enough already, without our going to stare at him."

"O Miss Fanny, it would be lucky for you if you had but half as little conceit in your foolish little head as there is in his wise one."

"You are so *entiché* with him."

"Don't use French words, like Lady Roslyn — it is so affected."

"You do not call her affected, do you?"

"Why, no, but then —"

"If she is affected," Mrs. Crofton said, "I think she must have been born so. I have no doubt that in the nursery she cried out for a *tartine* instead of for bread and butter, like other children."

Mr. Latimer, one of the men who had been reading before the fire-place, put down his book and said, "There are some people whom nature has provided with stilts, and they may be very charming in their way, but it never answers to provide them for one's self."

"There, now," Mark said, "don't you attempt to get upon them, little Fanny; you are a great love in your way, but in no other way, and certainly not in Lady Roslyn's, whom you as little resemble as your pretty Fido Lady Clara's greyhound. Are you angry, little woman?"

"*Tout autre que mon* [*frère*] *l'eût éprouvé sur l'heure*," she answered with a smile. "There is a bit of downright French; you don't object to that, do you? And now," she added, in a low voice, "let us go to the billiard-room, and learn grace from Mr. Crofton, dignity from Mr. Ashton, and every earthly perfection from M. Adrien d'Arberg."

The last person whom she alluded to was standing near the window when they entered the room, absorbed at that minute in his own thoughts, which Fanny somewhat unreasonably always ascribed to con-

ceit. Not to be occupied with her presupposed, in her opinion, too great a preoccupation with self.

Few people would have had a better right to be conceited, if advantages of every kind of looks, of mind and of fortune could justify such a feeling: a regular beauty of features, such as is seldom seen in real life; eyes which without being very large were perfectly shaped, and so shaded by thick eyelashes that they appeared dark, whereas they were blue; so earnest an expression, that it might have been thought almost melancholy, if serenity had not reigned in their inmost depths; a mixture of repose and of mobility was a singular characteristic of that remarkable countenance. He seemed as if his own rapid thoughts were passing before him in luminous array, suggesting every instant some new train of contemplation to an ever eager spirit, and an intellect that seemed almost to spiritualise his face. Many, like Fanny Apley, were apt to misunderstand him, because he was so often absorbed in his own meditations that the remarks of others were unattended to, and their attentions to himself unperceived. His own ideas were sometimes followed up by him in a manner that might look like egotism to superficial observers, who did not understand the deep simplicity of his uncommon character. No one ever forgot himself so completely as Adrien d'Arberg did. He was profoundly religious, and there was in his nature a tendency to mysticism that might

have led him to a too intense and metaphysical contemplation of the God he adored, if the strong hand of the Catholic religion had not been over him, restraining every exaggerated tendency or fanciful bias, and saying to a naturally ardent imagination and investigating understanding, "So far shalt thou go and no farther."

He was by descent a German, by birth and also position a Frenchman, and had been partly educated in England. These circumstances seemed all to have contributed more or less to the formation of his character, and to the tone of his mind. He would have been perhaps a dreamer, had not his life been from his earliest youth devoted to useful objects, and a passionate wish to serve his fellow-creatures been at once the subject of his dreams, and the incentive to incessant labours towards that end. He had something of the *insouciance* of the French character; but his zeal for the honour of God and the happiness of men had prevented its degenerating into levity, — had given seriousness to his views of life, and importance in his sight to his own actions, as well as to the events that passed around him. It had only left him careless of worldly advantages, which sat so lightly upon him that at times he scarcely seemed conscious of possessing them. His English education had imparted to him that keen sense of honour and that gentlemanlike regard for truth which most even worldly-

minded Englishmen possess, or at least appreciate. Even in manner there was something which made English people feel at home with him. He spoke our language with the utmost correctness, and a good accent; it was only by its resembling a little more the English of books than the careless routine of common conversation that he would have been detected as a foreigner, or else by his abruptly changing it into French, if any strong interest or emotion impelled him to the use of his native tongue.

He was distantly connected with the Apleys, and when a boy had sometimes spent his holidays at their house. Mark Apley and he had thus been friends from childhood, and their intimacy continued from habit rather than from any congeniality of minds or of character. On Adrien's side there was an affectionate regard for one whose amiable qualities, but weak understanding, commanded more love than respect; on the other, there was all the reverence and admiration which an inferior intellect yields to a superior one, when as in this case the acknowledgment is unmixed with the slightest amount of jealousy or of envy.

"Who is winning?" Mark asked, as he came into the billiard-room with his sister and joined Lady Roslyn, who was leaning against the corner of the chimney, while Mr. Ashton stood on one leg at the end of the billiard-table, with his body stretched across it, and his face screwed up into a shape of in-

tense and ugly earnestness, which contrasted with Adrien's easy attitude.

"O d'Arberg is beating me hollow, and it is a great shame, for I practised five hours yesterday, and took lessons all last year in London."

"Well, I am sure that is more than Adrien has done," Mark rejoined with a loud laugh.

"How do you know," Adrien said, turning suddenly round with a smile; "how do you know that I do not get up before breakfast to practise?"

"To judge by the books in your room," Mark said, with another burst of laughter, "I should say that you studied canon-law more than such cannons as those."

"You do not suppose that I read all those folios, do you?"

"Then why have them on your table?" Fanny observed.

"To press flowers in," he answered; "or to make people think me wise. There, Mr. Ashton, that is game, I think," and as the red ball flew into one pocket, and the white one into the other, he put down his cue and left the room.

"By Jove, I'll practise till dinner-time!" exclaimed the defeated man, with the energy of a Haydn determined to learn counterpoint, or an Austrian general returning to the charge after twenty defeats.

Adrien meanwhile had joined Lady Clara in her

morning-room. There were some of her guests who had acquired a sort of tacit right to invade it, and he was amongst the number.

"How is your Lady-Bird?" he said, as he sat down by her.

"O much better, and she is coming down this afternoon, so mind you come in here after luncheon. I am longing to show her to you. It is the very prettiest bird you ever saw; and now that I have caught her, I mean to make an immense deal of her, and —"

"Spoil her," he suggested.

"No, no, it will improve her to see something of us."

"Who are *us*."

"You and I, if you will not be affronted at the companionship. She is not at all aware of her own cleverness."

"And we are to open her eyes to it?"

"Certainly, I am always against keeping people in the dark about their own merits, as well as about anything else. Truth, M. d'Arberg, never does any harm."

"Why, is not there an ignorance which may be not only a bliss, but a blessing? — and is not the one you speak of such? To destroy it seems like brushing away the bloom of a fruit."

"O but you must not suppose that this charming

Lady-Bird is all *naïveté* and humility. She does not know how clever she is, but is not without some notions of her own abilities, and has rather a restless wish to put them to the test. And, for my own part, I believe that people are twenty times more likely to be really modest, who have satisfied themselves and others that they have something to be modest about, than if they remain all their lives beating about the bush, instead of ascertaining once for all the capabilities of their own understandings."

"There is truth in that, perhaps, but not the *whole* truth," Adrien said.

"What is your *arrière-pensée?*" Lady Clara asked. "You always have one, I know, when you are talking to me."

"None about this that I wish to keep back. You have taken a great fancy to this girl, who must be, by all accounts, a very peculiar person; and if you lavish praises upon her, and turn her head, you will be amusing yourself in a less safe manner than by writing pretty poems, or inventing new conservatories."

"Well, I will confess to you that she does interest me as a poem; that she does charm me as a flower. There is an inconventionality about her, which is quite refreshing, and a readiness of repartee which amuses me beyond description. Every new idea you put before her, every new subject you start, seems to be immediately laid hold of, and viewed in the light of her

fanciful imagination. I long to see her in society, *aux prises* with Mrs. Crofton, cross-questioned by Edward Latimer, made love to by Mark Apley."

"Now I *have* an *arrière-pensée* — will you ask me for it?"

"Yes, if it be not severe."

"Would it be severe to say that you are making a plaything of something too valuable to be played with?"

He looked at her in the earnest calm way which was peculiar to him, and she said quickly, "You take things too seriously, M. d'Arberg. I have passed through life gathering roses, and have found no thorns, and I will teach my Lady-Bird to do so too. I have often talked to you of her father. She sometimes puts me in mind of him. But if he had been half as charming as she is, I should not be now the happy person that I am."

"Ay," said Adrien with a smile, "did not you then gather a rose and find a thorn?"

"Ay, but I flung away both the rose and the thorn."

"No, I think you gathered the rose and left the thorn behind. But to return to what we were saying just now. It is from my own experience that I dread even kind interferences in what may vitally influence the destinies of others."

"How so, M. d'Arberg? Are you not the most cautious of men?"

"Not always. For instance, when I took Maurice Redmond to Italy I was giving myself the immense pleasure of an *engoûment* acted upon, of seeing enjoyment and apparently showing kindness; but I have often felt since that it would have been truer kindness not to have forced open a bud which, if destined to blow, would have been more surely developed by a slower process. To resist good impulses is one of the most difficult lessons to learn."

"And one I never intend to learn; I think it quite sufficient to resist bad ones, dear M. d'Arberg, and to make this hitherto imprisoned Lady-Bird try her wings, and enjoy her liberty, is I am convinced a good one. So the moral of your story is lost upon me, especially as I like you ten times better for having done an imprudent kind thing than for all the prudent good ones you have ever accomplished. But then you will not help me to turn the pretty head I shall show you after luncheon?"

"No, but I shall come and watch the working of your system."

After luncheon Gertrude was carried down to the drawing-room, and thence conveyed in a garden-chair to the conservatory on the other side of the parterre. It was fitted up also as a drawing-room, and Lady Clara often spent there several hours of the day. She

placed her on a couch in the midst of a kind of bower of American shrubs, through which the sun was shining and forming with its rays a fanciful pattern on the tesselated pavement. The smell was sweet but not too powerful, the breeze from without gently shook the blossoms of the pink azalias which now and then fell on the silk coverlet which had been thrown over her feet: on the table by her side were poems, new novels French and English, prints and drawings without end. Lady Clara sat opposite to her, arranging cut flowers in fanciful vases of Venetian glass and Bohemian crystal.

"I have sent everybody out this afternoon in the calèche and the pony-chaise — that is, everybody that I did not want to join us here. I shall only let them see you by degrees, Lady-Bird. My favourites shall be first admitted."

"And who are they, Lady Clara?"

"My cousin, Ellen Roslyn, Adrien d'Arberg, and Mark Apley: — that is my beauty, my hero, and my Newfoundland. Here comes the last." And Mark rushed up to Gertrude with a beaming face, and a thousand expressions of delight at seeing her again. "I hope Harriet told you, Miss Lifford, how overjoyed we were at your accident — I mean how sorry we felt about that, but how glad that it brought you here."

"It has been, indeed, a pleasant accident to me,"

she said. "Had my horse chosen to deposit me under one of my native oaks I should have been less obliged to him."

"I only wish I had had the luck to find you that night, Miss Lifford. I should have been frightened to death, but still so happy."

"By the way," she said, "who *did* find me? How strange it is that I have not yet asked the name of the person who discovered me that night."

"It was Adrien d'Arberg — lucky fellow, and he carried you to the house. I have done nothing but envy him ever since."

Gertrude remained silent, and opened a book as if in absence. "Did I not dream of Heaven that night!" she inwardly ejaculated.

Then she looked up, and the form and the face which for nearly a whole year had haunted her incessantly were once more before her. It was not exactly emotion that she experienced in seeing them again — her heart did not beat quicker, and no deeper colour rose in her cheek. On the contrary a great calm seemed to come over her, a sensation of indescribable repose; it was like a void filled up, a hope accomplished, a prayer granted. "God be praised!" she said to herself, and then marvelled at the solemnity of that mute thanksgiving.

"M. d'Arberg, let me introduce you to Miss Lifford." That insignificant commonplace sentence, so

carelessly pronounced, and yet containing in itself the germ of so many happy and so many miserable destinies!

Adrien bowed and said, "I once impertinently introduced myself to Miss Lifford. I hope she has forgiven it."

Gertrude made some scarcely audible answer, but her eyes looked all that such eyes as hers *can* look. From that instant a new era in her life began. What arose in her mind was neither a hope nor a project nor a design, but a conviction that there was for her but one destiny, one future, one possible fate. It was to love Adrien d'Arberg, and to walk this world with a spell on her soul, a secret in her heart, which might either exalt, transform, or annihilate her, but which would never leave as it had found her, which must be the source or the ruin of her happiness.

This kind of sentiment is either so deep and so intense that from its very excess it commands respect, or else it is degrading. There is no medium. Gertrude instinctively felt this, and it was this consciousness that preserved her self-respect, and gave her face such a beautiful expression at that moment. Mark Apley said to himself, "If I could think that that girl was in love with me I would propose to her directly." Adrien did not seem to think much of anything just then, except of a print from Landseer, which he had taken up and was examining. She felt glad that he

did not speak to her at first, that she had time to get accustomed to his presence before he directly addressed himself to her, and she began an insignificant conversation with Mark Apley.

"How well you are working those carnations, Miss Lifford! They seem to grow under your fingers. I wish men could work. Don't you think it would make them much pleasanter?"

"Perhaps it would, but there are only some men who ought to work."

"What sort of men?"

"Awkward clumsy ones. It would never do for a man to work well."

"Then," said Lady Clara, "they should not work at all, on Dr. Johnson's principle."

"Oh, but I quite disagree with the old Doctor."

"Do you really?" Mark exclaimed with a broad grin.

"A woman, for instance, might shoot, if only she did not know how to load her gun and held it as a parasol, and people may sing and act, but they must take care not to do so as well as professional singers and actors. Then, a woman may know Latin, if she does not know it too well."

"You seem very much afraid of perfection," Adrien said, raising his head with a smile.

"Yes, I am," she answered, turning her eyes slowly upon him.

"And I worship it," Lady Clara exclaimed, "wherever I find it."

"And where do you find it?" Adrien asked.

"There," she answered, as her favourite cousin appeared at the door of the conservatory, and certainly, if not in every respect, in outward appearance at least she seemed quite right.

Lady Roslyn was tall and beautiful, and her manner, which was exceedingly peculiar, was in harmony with her looks. It was pretty to see her and Lady Clara together. They were very fond of each other, and family likeness gave a kind of resemblance to two faces and manners, which were yet essentially very different.

"We were talking of perfection, Ellen, and you appeared at that moment — the living proof of an assertion I have just made."

"What assertion, I wonder?" Lady Roslyn said with a smile, as she sat down by Gertrude, whose hand she had affectionately pressed.

"That I adore it. There is a riddle which your modesty will not guess. But tell us, Ellen, whether you worship perfection as I do, or are as afraid of it as this Lady-Bird is."

"You must first define what you mean by perfection, Clara."

"Ay," Adrien said, looking up from the prints he was examining, "*that* is the question. No two of us

would agree, perhaps, on that point. Our heroes, I suspect, would be as various as our notions of heroism." Gertrude thought two might perhaps agree, if *one* would explain his own ideas on the subject.

"Well, I am like Miss Lifford," Mark Apley exclaimed; "I am afraid of heroes."

"What is your ideal of a hero, Lady Clara?" Gertrude asked, somewhat timidly, thus hoping that afterwards Adrien would describe his.

"Oh, mine is a polytheism, — a general hero-worship; I have hundreds of favourites in every age and clime, who would have fought like cat and dog had they met upon earth, as their works or their histories meet on my table. Adrien would consign to perdition some of my idols."

"No, I will hope the best for them all; so do not tell me their names."

"Severely charitable!" she exclaimed: "O Mark Apley, who is your hero?"

"The Duke of Wellington, of course," Gertrude said, for she already knew her admirer well enough to be sure that his imagination would not cross the sea in search of one; but when he re-echoed, "The Duke of Wellington, of course!" she coloured violently, suddenly remembering that Adrien was a Frenchman, and fancying she had shown a want of tact in suggesting to Mark his choice of a hero. Adrien per-

ceived it, and relieved her distress by laughing at her about it. She looked at Lady Clara, and said,

"I often speak without thinking, perhaps because I have so often been obliged to think without speaking."

"That must be very disagreeable," Mark observed, "it never happened to me. Whatever I think, I always say."

"Your thoughts, I am afraid, do not soar very high, dear Mr. Apley," Lady Clara observed in too low a voice for him to hear.

"But perhaps they run very straight, which may be better," Adrien whispered.

Mark was a great favourite with his friends. He was so spirited, generous, and kind, and there was an ingenuousness in his simplicity that made it quite loveable. Whenever he said anything foolish, they did not say "poor Mark," but "dear Mark." He was too good to be pitied.

"Guess whom I expect to-day," Lady Clara said, but not àpropos of heroes; by the way, we have none of us produced ours, except Mr. Apley."

"Let us leave them alone, then," Lady Roslyn said, "and tell us whom you expect."

"Sir William Marlow, and my brother Henry."

"Oh, is Egerton coming? I shall be delighted to see him," Adrien exclaimed.

"Shall you really, M. d'Arberg? That pleases but

surprises me; of all human beings, I should have thought he would have suited you the least."

"And why so, Lady Clara?"

"You differ so entirely on almost every subject."

"But sympathy and liking are quite separate things."

"And there can be sympathy without agreement."

"Of that I am not so sure, except in the case of a predominant affection, which has struck such profound roots in two hearts originally cast by Nature in the same mould that nothing can ever go deep enough to reach the electric bond of their union; except in such rare cases where love is stronger than death, or life also. I can hardly allow that there can be much sympathy where hopes, fears, wishes, and interests are all dissimilar. Do I make you understand what I mean, Lady Clara? The affection that creates sympathy under such circumstances is of the highest and most intense kind; but short of it, there may be regard and liking, but not sympathy: that is at least my view of the subject."

"Then, do you mean, for instance, that there is no sympathy between us?"

"Not the least, I should say." She laughed, but did not seem quite pleased.

"I should have thought that in our tastes and our feelings, our love of beauty in Nature and in art, our

interest in literature, there were sufficient grounds of sympathy."

"No, there is matter for agreeable conversation, for very pleasant intercourse, for great kindness on the one side, and a grateful and admiring regard on the other; but sympathy, dear Lady Clara, does not consist in reading the same books, admiring the same views, liking some of the same occupations."

"What does it consist in then?" she asked somewhat impatiently.

"In what would make you understand at this moment all I dare not say on the subject. In what would make you feel that we might not have one taste in common, and yet the most perfect sympathy. But after all I may be quite wrong: as in the case of heroes, we may apply a different meaning to the same word."

"As different," Gertrude said in a low voice, "as when we speak of admiring the Duke of Wellington or St. Vincent of Paul."

Who could have doubted what sympathy meant who saw their eyes meet at that moment?

"Do you and Henry dispute much, M. d'Arberg?"

"No; I believe we disagree too much to dispute."

"You are afraid of quarrelling?"

"No; your brother has an excellent temper, and I am too phlegmatic to lose mine easily, but to argue one ought to have certain points of agreement to start

from, and that is just what we have not. Egerton has no chance of convincing me, or I him, because, like Archimedes, we can find no world to rest our levers on; our point d'appui is not the same, and so we cannot bring our arguments to bear."

"For my part," Mark said, "I hate arguing, — it is such provoking work, — and especially with Lady Clara, who always manages to be in the right."

"Or to seem so," Adrien added, "which, perhaps, she will think as great a compliment."

"It is an equivocal one, but I will take it in the best sense. My quarrel with you, M. d'Arberg, is, that you never will let one penetrate to the bottom of your thoughts."

"What is it you wish to see there?"

"Your opinion of me."

"Then it is yourself and not me, that you wish to get acquainted with?"

"O *you!* I despair of ever finding *you* out. I do not know if you are the deepest of enthusiasts or the calmest of reasoners, the most enlightened philosopher or the most bigoted Papist."

"But what if the calmest reasoning awoke the deepest enthusiasm? If what you call the most bigoted, and I call the most earnest Popery, were to turn out after all to be the most enlightened philosophy — as many of the deep thinkers of our age are beginning to suspect?"

"It would require a miracle to convince me of it, and more than one of your modern miracles."

"That is hard upon him, Clara," Lady Roslyn said. "You insist on a miracle, and will not have a modern one. But the thinkers you were speaking of, M. d'Arberg; they may be *deep*, perhaps, but not *free*."

"And do you like free thinkers, Lady Roslyn?"

"I like freedom of thought."

"And is not that free thinking?"

"You are playing upon words. I do not like the free thinking that ends in infidelity."

"Then the freedom you advocate must walk in leading-strings of your own selecting."

"Not of my selecting, M. d'Arberg."

"Of whose choosing, then?"

"Oh, if Ellen once begins an argument, we shall never get out of it again," Lady Clara exclaimed, "and it is not your religion but yourself I want to understand. At times I have supposed you to be a devoted supporter of legitimacy, a chivalrous admirer of the exploded theories of divine right, and at others, almost found you out to be a thorough-going democrat, with a lurking tenderness for Socialist opinions."

Adrien laughed, and said, "If you will not use the *key*, Lady Clara, how can you expect to unlock a door?"

"You have never yet given me the 'Open Sesame' into the secret chambers of *your* opinions."

"Has she ever asked you for it?" Lady Roslyn said, with a smile, "*C'est l'obstacle qu'elle aime — elle ne veut que chercher.*"

"You do not know him yet, Ellen; he has at once the most audacious and the most humble, the most impetuous and the most imperturbable spirit imaginable, and while I am saying all this to him he sits looking at me as if I were neither praising nor insulting him."

"Because I suppose you do not intend to do either."

"I believe you like to be a riddle, and to baffle all my penetration. Is not this trying, Gertrude?"

"To which of you, Lady Clara?"

"To me, you most impertinent child," Lady Clara answered, with a smile. "I read his books, and fancy that through them I learn to know him; but when I see him again he puzzles me afresh. He writes pages of the most exciting eloquence; he carries you on by the might of his enthusiasm till you almost lose your footing, and feel, at least, if you do not always think, with him; but when you meet him face to face, he changes his tactics and draws you out instead of on, listens to you patiently, hopes the best for you, as he said just now of my heroes, but leaves you in doubt

what is the sentence passed in the secret tribunal of his thoughts."

"If I thought you in earnest I would defend myself, but you must not misconstrue my silence. I do not plead guilty."

"Gertrude shall judge between us in a few days. If she finds you less impenetrable than I have done, I will give in."

He smiled and said, "But perhaps she will use the key I was speaking of." Again Gertrude's eyes met his, but she hastily turned hers away, for she felt that they might express more than she wished.

"But it is very provoking," Lady Clara continued, "that you should be too modest or too proud to talk up to your books."

He looked at her with an amusingly imploring expression of countenance and said, "Dear Lady Clara, I will call on your favourite phrenologist the next time I go to London, and get him to write my character for you; I will talk like a book if you wish it, and hold forth every evening on any subject you may select, if only you will not discuss me any more."

At that moment the sound of a carriage driving up the avenue was heard, and Lady Clara exclaimed, "That must be Henry!"

"Does Sir William Marlow come with him?" Mark inquired.

"Yes, I believe so; I hope they will tell them we are here."

"I will let them know," Adrien said, "I am going to the house."

As he left the conservatory Gertrude watched his tall figure as it disappeared amongst the trees. Mark observed the direction of her eyes and said, "You had never seen d'Arberg before, had you?"

"Yes, once at your house, the day of the breakfast."

"Did you ever see anybody half so handsome?"

"Half perhaps, but certainly not more than half."

"He is a capital fellow. Fanny says he is conceited, but it is not true, nobody thinks so little of himself. How different he is from Sir William Marlow."

Just then Lady Clara's brother Mr. Egerton and the identical Sir William Marlow were seen at a distance walking from the house, and in a few minutes they had joined them. Mr. Egerton was good-looking without being handsome. He seemed pleasing and intelligent. His companion was short and slight, with delicate features and a remarkable forehead. His dark hair was brought back in a way that gave him a rather wild expression. Mr. Egerton had just sufficient shyness in his manner to make apparent his friend's singular want of it. In his way of standing, sitting, shaking hands, or performing any of the ordinary ac-

tions of life, there was the stamp of a most profound conceit. His self-complacency hung about him as a garment, or rather it seemed as much his natural attribute as the strut, the hop, or the twitter of certain birds belongs to them. The very sound of his voice was conceited. His calmness was irritating, the way he crossed his legs and caressed his foot exasperating, and the clearness of his articulation despairing. He united in his own person the active and the passive moods of vanity. Soon after the revolution of February, M. de Lamartine declared that a Frenchman's proper occupation is the contemplation of his own magnanimity, and at the same time an English journalist described England as sitting in unapproachable greatness. Now, Sir William Marlow seemed to unite in himself both the characteristics of these two very different nations. From the height of his unapproachable self-satisfaction, he seemed eternally to contemplate his own perfections. That he had good qualities, that he was clever, and that he had a considerable command of language could not be denied. Lady Clara liked him, and perhaps she was right. It certainly is not right to dislike conceit as much as people in general do. It is better to be conceited than to be vicious or cruel, but the strut of a peacock and the impudence of a sparrow are often more irritating than the fierceness of a vulture or a hawk; it is not easy to be just when we are affronted, and such people

as Sir William are a walking affront that our own conceit, however kept in order, can with difficulty endure.

Mr. Egerton was evidently struck with Gertrude's beauty. Sir William was never struck with anything. For a few moments Lady Clara kept up an animated conversation with the new comers, in which Lady Roslyn and Gertrude occasionally joined; and then, looking tired with that kind of fatigue peculiar to those who make society the business of their lives, she said she must lie down for an hour before dinner and proposed to go home. Mark Apley drew Gertrude in the garden-chair across the parterre. Mr. Egerton talked to her as they went along. Sir William gave his arm to Lady Clara, and made clever answers to her brilliant remarks; and the sun went down behind the hills, and the dew was thick upon the grass, the flowers gave out their sweetest odours, — the air blew freshly on Gertrude's cheek, and an animated sense of enjoyment excited her spirits. Life appeared to her under a very different aspect than it had ever presented before; she thought it pleasant to be young and pretty, admired and amused. She felt as if her tastes and inclinations were in harmony with the refined beauty of the objects that surrounded her, while a romantic sentiment of admiration for one well calculated to inspire it imparted a meditative character to her enjoyment, which increased and exalted it.

When she reached her room, she sat down in a luxurious arm-chair, before a small wood fire that burned brightly in the grate, and opened a volume which she had carried off from the drawing-room table. It was the Life of Christina of Sweden, which Maurice had once mentioned to her. Adrien's name was on the title-page. "I understand him," she said to herself, "but will he ever understand me? I dare not give him the key to my inmost thoughts, which he so fearlessly holds out to me of his own;" and taking a pencil she sketched in the faintest manner a key on the blank page of the book before her, and wrote under it these lines:

"Da me posso nullo
Con Dio posso tutto,
A Dio l'onore
A me il disprezzo."

CHAPTER XIII.

"Di gelosia mi moro
E non lo posso dire!
Chi mai provó di questo,
Affanno piú funesto
Piú barbaro dolor."

METASTASIO.

MAURICE REDMOND had been for some time past engaged to spend a few weeks at Audley Park. He had given lessons the year before to Lady Clara, or rather played with her and to her; and she had soon perceived that his education and his manners fitted him for any society, and that he was an addition to hers. She had accordingly invited him to spend part of the autumn with them; and as he travelled from London to Stonehouseleigh, on his way to Audley Park, he had often turned over in his mind the probable chances of meeting Gertrude at his mother's house, or in some other chance manner, without dreaming that he should soon find her established under the same roof with himself. It was Mary who announced it to him, soon after his arrival. He had devoted two or three days to his home and to her; and one of the first things he heard was the account of Gertrude's accident, of her residence at Audley Park, and of Mr. Lifford's de-

parture for Spain. He had left London with the firmest resolution of banishing from his mind all vague hopes with regard to Gertrude. He had latterly wondered how such ideas could ever have occurred to him: it had, indeed, been but a transient dream called forth by her presence and her unconscious glances, and dissolved in absence; he had now resolved to press Mary at once to fix a period for their marriage, and this satisfied his conscience. It seemed as if he had given up something, whereas it was only that calmer thoughts had shown him the utter impossibility of another destiny, and what he did not give up was the passion which he still nourished in the secrecy of his heart.

Mary thought him looking ill, and hoped the country would do him good. He had worked hard in London, and made a little money. He smiled as he told her so, and asked her if she could begin housekeeping on such slender means as they could command. She made an evasive answer, and looked at him very earnestly. There was evidently something that disquieted her in his appearance: "Why do you look so wistfully at me, Mary? — Are you trying to read something in my eyes?" She gave a quick suppressed sigh, and shook her head.

"Then, Mary, will you agree to it? Shall we be married next spring?" She was silent, and seemed to be struggling with herself.

"Are you afraid of making me too happy by such a promise?" he said, and putting his arm round her waist, he tried to look in her face.

"Too happy," she slowly repeated. "No, my only wish is to make you happy."

"Then, you will consent to become my wife?" She looked as pale as the white roses of the porch where they were sitting, but assented gently to his proposal, and in a few minutes left him and went up to her room.

There kneeling by the bedside she burst into tears. In a few minutes she got up and bathed her eyes with cold water. "*His* eyes must not shed tears," she said to herself. "*They* must not burn with hot drops like these. O my God, let him not weep. Let me stand between him and sorrow — and never in the way of his happiness. But *that* never, never could be happiness, and I will stand, so Heaven help me, between him and her. She shall not break his heart. O these blinding tears!" she exclaimed, "how they burn the eyes." There was a strange anxiety about her as she made these exclamations and walked quickly up and down her room; but when she went down stairs again she was more cheerful than usual, and even encouraged him to talk of future plans and arrangements.

When under the influence of her society Maurice believed all that he desired to persuade himself. There

was something so tender and unobtrusive in her manner, she was so indispensable to him in various ways, he was so accustomed to the perfume of sympathy and of affection with which she surrounded him, that it would have been difficult for him to call what he felt for her by another name than love, or to give that name to the tormenting and wayward emotions which he experienced in Gertrude's presence. He would certainly have been very unhappy that day if Mary had refused to become his wife. He was satisfied with this consciousness, and did not trouble himself to reflect what his feelings would have been if, at the moment she had accepted him, he was suddenly to have heard that Gertrude was about to marry, or that he was never to see her again. He asked himself no such probing questions either then or the next day on his way to Audley Park, but only mentally protested, as if to silence some troublesome self-suggestions, that he loved Mary firmly and truly, and that he looked to her for his future happiness, — that in sorrow or in joy, in health or in sickness, she would be to him, a shield, a comfort, a friend and a support, — that together they had begun life, and together they would pass through it, and together end it. What injury was it to her if, as artists place before them beautiful pictures to inspire their conceptions, as others listen to the most exciting music they can procure, or revel in the most romantic scenery

they can find, and thus influence their imaginations and kindle their enthusiasm? — why should not Lady-Bird be his picture to gaze upon — the muse from which he should draw his inspirations — the "dame de ses pensées," in the domain of art and of romance? It was his scruples that made him untrue to Mary — Mary his gentle sister in his childhood — now his betrothed, soon to be his wife. That was an earnest tie, a serious affection, beyond the nonsense of romance, the trifling of imagination. Did he, could he ever have thought of Lady-Bird as his wife? O no, she was not made for the common-place cares and duties of life; and Shakespeare's often repeated lines about "a bright particular star" came into his head as he was riding up the avenue.

About ten days had elapsed since Gertrude's first appearance in the drawing-room of Audley Park. During that interval the various ingredients of which its society was composed had been shaken together, and the process of assimilation had begun to take place. People had found out whom they liked, or disliked; who amused and who bored them; who made useful butts; who talked and who listened well; who was always in a good humour, and who could not endure a joke; at what hour the library and the newspapers were unoccupied; when the Miss Apleys got somebody to play and sing, and talked all the time themselves, or Mr. Egerton and Mark Apley argued

about Protection and Freetrade, or General Burnwood gave, "in a few words," the history of his campaigns. Some friendships were dawning, some flirtations budding, some aversions growing up, — silent ones which were the deepest, busy ones which were tiresome, quarrelsome ones which were amusing. Lady Clara was the perfection of an hostess; she paid enough attention to her guests to make them feel quite at home, and not too much to infringe on the charm of complete independence. She left well alone; never insisted on those who seemed happy in one way that they should amuse themselves in another, but if the most insignificant person in the society looked bored or neglected, she found them some occupation or amusement. She adapted herself in turn to every one; not so much out of amiability, though she was amiable, but from a wish to see none but happy faces about her, and a dislike to sad ones. "Life," she said one day, "was too short for gloom." "True," Adrien answered. They agreed, but did not sympathise.

Lady Roslyn showed her Mrs. Hemans' beautiful poem of the Revellers, and said,

"You too, Clara, would banish all but the gay in heart from your festive hall."

"No," she said, "but I would try to force happiness upon them, and only allow them that shade of melancholy — not without something of enjoyment in

it — which makes us enter into the feelings of poetry, and the charm of emotion. I would not banish *her*, for instance," pointing to Gertrude, "though in Mrs. Hemans' words, 'Her eyes' quick flash through their troubled shroud' does not always indicate a heart at ease; but I try to teach her not to look at things too seriously, not to '*prendre la vie au tragique*,' and I hope I shall succeed."

Mrs. Crofton, who had been listening, smiled and said, "Example can do much, my dear Lady Clara, but Nature is stronger still, and I do not expect that you will succeed in teaching the soul of fire that shines out of those dark eyes to glide along life's stream in the rose-leaf fashion that becomes you so well."

Mrs. Crofton and Lady Clara did not suit. They were a little too alike, and a great deal too unlike. Both lived in and for society; both were irreproachable in their moral characters; but Mrs. Crofton was as plain as Lady Clara was beautiful, and so she had to work harder in her vocation, though she succeeded nearly as well. She was not as eloquent, as graceful, or as amiable; but she was sharper, cleverer, and droller. No one was ever tired of her, and some fastidious people did think Lady Clara was a little too pictorial in her language, and high-flown in her ideas. She was too much engrossed in her own impressions to watch the effect she made on others; but Mrs. Crofton had a lynx eye which always detected

the fluctuating symptoms of interest and *ennui* in those she spoke to. In everything she said there was more power and less charm than in the other, as was once said by a witty Frenchman of two ladies, "*Elle était le mâle de l'espèce, dont l'autre était la femelle.*"

Mr. Latimer was very happy at Audley Park, for he had one ruling passion — the investigation of characters, and there was a fine field for it in the present party. He wrote to a friend:

"It is the most amusing thing in the world to live in this menagerie, — this 'happy family,' in which I feel myself like the owl with whom nobody meddles, and who sleeps with his eyes open. There is our hostess, a lovely bird with the most stainless plumage and the sweetest voice, warbling mellifluously on her golden perch, but keeping at a respectful distance from that clever little mocking-bird, Mrs. Crofton, whose sharp beak pecks rather harder than is always agreeable. There is that stately Bird-of-Paradise, Lady Roslyn, and a family of canary-birds, the Miss Apleys, pleasant enough if they did not chirp so incessantly. Then they have got another young creature whom I hardly know how to describe. It is half foreign and half English, a young eaglet perhaps, born in the Pyrenees, but bred in an old house in this old-fashioned county. Such eyes it has, I have no doubt they could stare at the sun if they tried. You know I am not often in the humour in which it would be safe for a child to

play with me, but this young eaglet is not afraid of my snarling. Then we have all sorts of other creatures besides, gentlemanlike young birds like Egerton, cock-sparrow geniuses, and would-be statesmen like Marlow, good humoured honest geese like Apley, and a very tall French bird whom I cannot make head or tail of; besides many others, for the cage can hardly hold us all. We have not fought much yet. There is only a little beating of wings and hissing now and then. The cock-sparrow has a violent dislike to the tall French bird, but they have not come to blows yet. The canary-birds look with a jaundiced eye at the eaglet, perhaps because they think it will take their goose for a swan. But I think it would come to my perch sooner, — and I almost wish it would. It goes by the name of Lady-Bird. By the way, don't you remember a certain Henry Lifford to whom Lady Clara was engaged some twenty-two years ago when just emerging from the school-room. This is his daughter by a Spanish wife. I hope I shall not make a fool of myself about her."

Gertrude might have made fools of almost all the men who saw her, had she chosen it; and sometimes a wicked wish crossed her mind, that she had known something of society before Adrien had taken from her all desire for the admiration of others. She tried to shake off the impression he had made upon her, but the effort proved utterly vain; a look, a word, or

a smile from him were more to her than the homage or adoration of the whole world besides. His unconscious power over her was unbounded. She did not conceive the possibility of differing with him in opinion, of ever acting again in any way that she might have heard him casually condemn. His slightest word was law, his books her daily meditation, his presence or his absence the regulating cause of her cheerfulness or depression. He was on very friendly terms with her, but nothing more. There was great kindness, but no devotion in his manner, and she never wished to see him at her feet: could she ever inspire him with an interest in her fate, which would justify to herself her ever-increasing regard for him — it seemed that *that* would be the highest bliss earth could offer. When they talked together, she was most innocently hypocritical; for she so identified herself with his thoughts and his feelings that they seemed naturally to become hers, and his convictions and opinions to transfer themselves into her mind by an unconscious process of assimilation. She talked to him of her childhood, of her home, of her mother, but in a different way from that which was usual to her. This was not dissimulation; it was a change wrought by the influence he exercised over her. Hardness melted in the light of his eyes; levity disappeared before his earnestness, and pride vanished in the presence of his perfect simplicity.

She happened to be alone in the drawing-room when Maurice arrived. The day was cold, and everybody taking exercise, which she could not yet do; and with a book in her hand, and her eyes as often fixed on the fire as on its pages, she had spent the hours since luncheon. She was taking a resolution which cost her a great effort, but in which she was swayed by the one ruling influence which now governed all her thoughts and actions. She must return to Lifford Grange the next day. It could not be right to stay away from her mother any longer; and if she could drive in the pony-chaise at Audley Park, she was well enough, it was clear, to go home in a carriage. She was not without hope that Lady Clara would invite, and her mother allow her to come back to the Paradise she was about to leave; but she must go and see her mother. Adrien had said something the day before — had asked a casual question — which had fixed her wavering thoughts on the subject: but it was an immense effort to go without being *sure* of coming back — *sure* of finding him there again. For the first time she thought of the future as connected with him, — recollected that though he had relations and interests in England and in Ireland, his country was France, and the chances of life might never bring them together again. "Was this possible?" she asked herself. "Possible to embark one's all of happiness in a bark that casually floats alongside of ours on the

stream of life, and then see it drift away in another direction, without the power of remonstrance or complaint." It seemed like signing her own death-warrant to propose to go away. "But would I not die if *he* thought it right?" she mentally exclaimed, — smiled at her own extravagance, and then sighed; for her conscience protested against the rank idolatry of her heart.

At that moment the door opened, and Maurice Redmond was ushered in. He started when he saw her, but quickly recovering himself he came up to her, and was received most kindly. She was very glad to see him, and they spent some time together before any one came in. "How strange it seems, Maurice, to meet *here*," she said. "Hitherto when we have conversed, it has always been either in the open air, or on the downs or the woods where we used to play in former times, or in Mrs. Redmond's cottage, or mamma's dark room. It seems to me a whole year since my accident. Don't you think there are weeks in which one lives a life?"

"There are moments," he answered, "in which I suppose the happiness or the misery of a whole life can be concentrated."

"Yes," she thoughtfully answered, "I can imagine that it might be so. What has been the happiest moment of your life, Maurice?"

She was thinking very little of the person she ad-

dressed. She had forgotten that it had ever crossed her mind that he admired her even in the distant respectful manner which it had once amused her to observe. It was absently she had asked that question, as she might have inquired what was the most beautiful view he had ever seen, and she did not remark that his face flushed as he answered, "The one when I nearly fainted at the Woodlands' breakfast." She smiled and said, "You like extremes, I see. The pleasure of success, preceded by an instant's suffering to make it keener, is your favourite idea of happiness. Well, again I say it may be so, but I don't quite like the receipt. I feel with regard to happiness as children do about a promised toy. 'Give it me *now*.' — How is Mary?"

"Well, quite well," he answered in a tone of dejection; but rousing himself, added, "you know she is so unselfish that she would never tell us if she was not so; that is, as long as she could exert herself as usual."

"She *is* good," Gertrude exclaimed.

"O she is good," he retorted, "good beyond what any one can know or imagine. There are depths of tenderness and of patience in her heart which cannot be fathomed. Even I — who have known her from childhood, and revered her almost as a saint — I am sometimes astonished at her goodness."

"Do you think her as good as one person whom you used to talk to me about — as M. d'Arberg?"

"Yes, I believe so. They are both as near perfection as I can fancy human beings can be, but Mary has none of the stimulants and rewards which a man's career holds out to virtue. She has no earthly reward."

"Except your affection," Gertrude said, for the first time alluding in speaking to him to the attachment existing between them.

"Ay, I love her," he answered, in a tone of unaccountable emotion and irritation; "God help her, I love her very much."

This sentence seemed strange to Gertrude, and she looked at him inquiringly. He did not notice it, but said — "And you have made acquaintance with Adrien d'Arberg. Had I said too much about him, Lady-Bird, — Miss Lifford, I mean?"

"Never mind, Maurice, everybody here calls me so, and you who gave me the name have a better right than any one to do so."

"O Lady-Bird, thank you," he exclaimed, and seizing her hand, kissed it. "Forgive me; in Italy the very beggars kiss the hand that relieves them. It is only in England that it is thought presumptuous." She felt his manner odd, and abruptly changed the subject. "I am going back to Lifford Grange to-

morrow." "To-morrow! for how long?" "O probably for good and all."

At that moment Mr. Latimer came into the room, nodded to Maurice, and sat down between him and Gertrude, opposite to the fire. "Well, Lady-Bird, you have not been out to-day. What have you been doing with yourself? What are your studies? I should like to know how you spend your time when we are all out of the way. You are one of the few women I have ever met with who seems to like to be alone. You think a great deal?"

She put her fingers to her temples, and said, "It is a mill always at work, but it grinds more chaff than corn."

"I believe it would grind anything you chose to put into it. What has it been busy upon to-day?"

"A point of duty, Mr. Latimer."

"O what a dry bone."

"But with marrow in it, too."

"Who threw it in — yourself or somebody else?"

"Conscience picked it up, threw it in —"

"And it has been ground into nothing."

"No, into something, — and something disagreeable, too."

"What is that?"

"The unpleasant circumstance for myself that I am going away to-morrow."

"O stuff and nonsense; you can't go away."

"I wish I could not; but I can, and shall."

"But you will come back here soon?"

"I don't know: one never knows anything in this world, I find. It is all a living '*au jour la journée.*'"

"O but we won't live without seeing you again. We shall all die."

"I will come at all events to *your* funeral, Mr. Latimer."

"And not to Mark Apley's? Poor fellow! he will die first. *I* shall make a struggle, and pine away by degrees. But what do you do with yourself in that enchanted abode where nobody penetrates? Has anybody ever got in? Have you, Mr. Redmond?"

"O yes, he has," she answered quickly, "often enough. He is 'mon pays,' as the French peasants say."

"They tell me you read immensely."

"How do *they* know anything about it?"

"Here is Lady Clara, and the about-to-be-annihilated Mark. She says she must go away to-morrow."

"So she told me this morning, but I would not believe her. Besides, she ought not to go before the doctor has given his permission."

"I *must*, dear Lady Clara. I have told mamma to send the carriage for me to-morrow."

"Then you must come back as soon as you can, dear child. We cannot do without you."

"So I told her. She will find us lying about like dead flies, if she stays away too long. Perhaps Sir William Marlow may survive, and wander about the house like the last man."

Mark's usually radiant face was overcast. He was provoked at Mr. Latimer's manner to Gertrude. He felt he had not made any way with her since she had been at Audley Park; he was not quick enough to discover where was the danger he had to fear, and was jealous of the sort of easy footing on which Mr. Latimer was with her, although he was quite old enough to be her father. Maurice was disappointed at her departure, and yet relieved in one sense by the reflection that she was to be replaced in the solitary position where none approached her. He felt frightened at his own agitation when any other man spoke to her; Mr. Latimer's manner, his jokes about Mark, were intolerable to him. If he felt that already, what would it be to live in the same house with her, in the midst of such a society. He should never be able to control his nervous irritation. It was better she should go. He would have wished to hurry her away. Once within those old walls of Lifford Grange, he could think of her, dream of her, get a glimpse of her now and then, and no one else would gaze on her beauty, — no one else would call her Lady-Bird, or talk in joke of dying for her. What business had they to joke with such a thought? Poor Maurice, it

was no laughing matter to him. While he was dressing for dinner, he embodied these thoughts in verse, according to his usual practice, and set them to an impassioned German air.

"Return, return where careless eyes may never rest on thee,
Where none, not even once by chance, may see thy face but me.
Go back to those old yew-trees' shade, where often from afar
I 've watched thee as the learned watch in the deep sky a star.
Go back where birds and whisp'ring winds alone will haunt thine ears;
Go back to those deserted walks, the haunts of former years.
The jests, the smiles of thoughtless men, were never meant for one
Who in those silent solemn halls has lived and bloomed alone: —
Let them not praise thee, hold thy hand, and call thee by a name
Which time has stamped upon my brain in characters of flame.
Go, for the sake of pity, go. Thy every word and look,
Here, amidst those who laugh or sigh, my spirit cannot brook."

There were sincere and insincere regrets uttered for Gertrude's departure, and sincere and insincere wishes for her return. She did not care much for any of them. Lady Clara, whom she was really fond of, she knew was sorry to lose her. Though worldly in some respects, or rather of the world, there was an openness in her clear eyes and smooth brow which was unmistakeable. The truth was in her, and her smile was a pledge. Adrien had not approached her that day; and it was rather late in the evening before he did so. He had been engaged in a long conversation with Mrs. Crofton and Sir William Marlow. The latter had treated him "*Du haut de sa petite grandeur*" at first; but finding what an adversary he had to deal with, had become eager and put forth all the strength of his

understanding, and a close encounter had taken place between them on some of the leading questions of the day. Mrs. Crofton, with that admirable art of listening which she possessed to an eminent degree, had stimulated the sharp encounter, and given an amusing turn to it, when Sir William was growing bitter. Nearly opposite to them sat Gertrude, with one of the Miss Apleys, and several men around them. Maurice was sitting on a chair a little behind her, and she now and then turned round to speak to him.

"I wonder," he said, in a low voice, "if they would think M. d'Arberg quite sane here, if they knew some of the things he does. To me, who know how a great deal of his time is employed and the use he makes of his fortune, it seems so odd to see him in this sort of society making himself agreeable like any ordinary man of the world."

"He is very rich, is not he?"

"Very rich; I believe his mother was an heiress, his father married her when he was an *émigré*. His good works are prodigious, also; but they are done so secretly that few people know anything of them. I am convinced he will end by being a priest." Gertrude turned pale; Maurice saw it and a jealous pang shot through his heart. Thank Heaven, she was going the next day, and d'Arberg would not, probably, stay long in England. They might never meet again. Why had he not dreaded their becoming acquainted? Why, fool

that he was, had he talked to her so much about him? He went on in an odd abrupt manner to say that he must have hurt his fortune by his extravagant charities, that this was probably the reason why he had never married —

"O, no," she said in a quiet manner, "Mr. Audley, who knows him well, says he has large property both in France and in Ireland."

"You have ascertained that he is rich?" he answered in a tone of ill-disguised agitation.

"I have heard it," she said, and then became absent, for the hand of the French clock was travelling fast, and her impatience was becoming almost intolerable. At last the conversation at the opposite table came to an end, and Adrien, as if he had perceived her for the first time that evening, came and sat in the chair opposite to her. Miss Apley was talking eagerly to some one on the other side of the couch. Maurice had seized a newspaper, and seemed engrossed with it, but was still near enough to hear every word that passed. "I hear you are going home to-morrow," Adrien said, and looked at her with an expression of interest. "Yes," she answered, without raising her eyes from the nosegay she held in her hand, "life cannot be spent amongst flowers: not mine at least."

"You have enjoyed yourself here?"

"Almost too much. I wish I had not been thrown

on this bed of roses, for I am afraid it has unfitted me for another couch."

"Well, it certainly is not a very bracing atmosphere that we live in here. It is floating down the stream, instead of pulling against it."

"And yet," she said, "what fault can be found with such an existence as Lady Clara's? How innocent it is! how affectionate she is! Loving and beloved, giving pleasure and receiving it. I think it is a delightful sight to see her, so beautiful herself, in the midst of beauty of every kind. By changing a single word, one could apply to her that pretty French line,

"Et rose elle a vécu, comme vivent les roses."

"True," he answered, with one of his slow smiles, "but was she sent into the world to live the life of a rose, or to bear her part in the great battle-field of life? Her existence always seems to me too much like Eve's in Paradise — Eve *before* not *after* the Fall."

Gertrude pulled off all the pink petals of one of the flowers in her hand and showed him the green calyx which formed a sort of cross. "Ay!" he exclaimed, "it will be found in the end, but ought it not to have been taken up sooner?"

"I should like the battle-field of life," she said, "but to sit still is what I dread."

"We must each of us fight at our post," he answered. "The order of the day is all that concerns us. Do you go early to-morrow?"

"Not very early," she replied, with a faltering voice.

"I wanted to ask you if on Sunday I might hear mass at the chapel at Lifford Grange, — it is nearer than Stonehouseleigh, and I should be glad to see Father Lifford at the same time." Her eyes flashed with a joy that she could not disguise, and she assented briefly, but in a manner that showed the delight she felt.

"Mamma will see you, perhaps, if she is pretty well."

"Would she? I should be so glad to know her."

"She never receives strangers, but —"

"But you think she would see me?"

"I have read to her your books; and you have been so kind to me."

"Kind!" he said with a smile.

"Yes; you carried me here the day of my accident. I am sure she will wish to thank you. Can you speak Spanish?"

"Yes."

"That will do, it is all right," — and with a movement of irresistible delight she threw up her nosegay into the air, and caught it back again as it fell. He looked a little thoughtful, and did not talk to her any more that evening, but sat on in the same place. Maurice had been asked to sing a new romance which Mrs. Crofton had just received from Paris, the words

by Victor Hugo; it was called the "Fou de Tolède." He complied: when he came to the following stanza his eyes fixed themselves on Gertrude: —

> Un jour Sabine a tout donné —
> Sa beauté de Colombe
> Et son amour,
> Pour l'anneau d'or du Comte de Saldagne
> Pour un bijou —
> Le vent qui vient à travers la montagne
> Me rendra fou.

She did not observe his emotion, but the music of this song — which was wild like a dream of passion seemed to suit her thoughts also.

CHAPTER XIV.

"Not chance of birth or place has made us friends,
Being — of different tongues and nations,
But the endeavour for the self-same ends,
With the same hopes, and fears, and aspirations."

SHAKESPEARE.

In her mother's arms — at her mother's feet — Gertrude spent the next few days. That dark room had grown very dear to her. Her feelings were now more in unison with its aspect. The picture of the Duke of Gandia seemed to look approvingly upon her, as by every little exertion in her power she endeavoured to contribute to her mother's comfort. She told her again and again all the particulars of her stay at Audley Park, amused her with descriptions of the people she had seen, made her smile sometimes and sigh at others, and understood her smiles but not her sighs. Then she talked to her of Adrien, gave a minute account of his looks, of his manner, repeated every word he had said to her, and announced that he would come to Lifford Grange on the following Sunday.

"You must tell Father Lifford, love. I wonder what your father would feel about it?"

"About what, Mamma? About M. d'Arberg's

coming to church? You know the chapel is open to every one on Sunday."

"Yes, dearest, but if he comes I think you must ask him to have some luncheon."

"Yes, to be sure," Gertrude said, with her brightest smile, "we must not let him starve, and then you must see him."

"O no, my dearest child, I cannot do that."

"Oh, you must, dearest Mamma, it will do you a world of good. How I wish I had taken to managing you long ago. You would be so much better by this time. I am beginning to manage Father Lifford too. By going a little lame I make him do whatever I like now."

"O but Gertrude, that is very naughty."

"No, no, I don't *pretend* to limp, I only show it off. Oh, we could be so happy here if —" Here she stopped, and a dark cloud passed over her face. In a moment she said, "Lady Clara would come and see you if you liked, Mamma."

Mrs. Lifford became agitated, "My child, don't let her come. I could not bear it. I am very very grateful to her for her kindness to you, but indeed I cannot see her. I can see nobody. I am not fit for it."

"Not Lady Clara then, not anybody but M. d'Arberg. He will talk Spanish to you, and you will understand

each other so well. Dearest, when I talk to him, it gives me such a wish to be good like him."

Mrs. Lifford looked tenderly at her child and said, "Geltrudina, don't give away that little heart of thine to a Frenchman." She put her hand on her heart with a smile and said to herself, "I have none left to give away. But he is just as much English as French, or Spanish, or anything else, Mamma. He is only like himself."

"Do you think he likes you, Gertrude?"

"He does not dislike me, and sometimes I have thought he appeared a little interested about me. But I am no more worthy of him — than Muff," she said, hiding her face with the little dog's flossy head.

"And then, dearest, you should not think of anything of the sort without knowing more about him."

"I do know all about him; I know that he is the best, the cleverest, the noblest of human beings."

"That may be, dear child. Father Lifford says he is very good; but that is not all that your father would think of."

"But, dearest Mamma, M. d'Arberg is not thinking of me in the way you mean; other people paid me attentions at Audley Park. He did not. Maurice Redmond says he will be a priest; so you need have no apprehensions on that subject. If he ever should

think of me, I have no fear that his family could be objected to. Mr. Audley said it was very ancient, and he is very rich and everything people care about — but he will never dream of marrying me. To be *his* wife would be too great a blessing."

"O Gertrude, Gertrude."

"You will see him on Sunday, Mamma; don't think me too foolish till then. Now I shall go down stairs, and play at chess with Father Lifford. It always puts him in a good humour to beat me, and I want him to be in a very good humour just now."

In spite of her remaining lameness, she walked briskly towards the drawing-room. Her manner was altogether changed — its restless listlessness had disappeared, and her mother was confirmed in the belief that a little change was a good thing for her. She did not yet understand the great change that had almost transformed her into another creature, — the awakening of that deep power of loving which had hitherto lain in her heart "like an unopened flower."

Adrien d'Arberg had been much attached in his early youth to a cousin of his who had died of consumption at the age of eighteen. Her virtues, her ardent piety, and her saintly death had made an impression upon him which nothing had effaced, and her memory had been associated with every

interest and exertion of his life. She was a German, — one of those fair, pale girls whose eyes have a natural sentimentality bordering on melancholy. Her temper was serene and serious. There had been something at once romantic and religious in her affection for him. She had had a presentiment of her early death, and had never looked forward to earthly happiness. Whenever he talked of the future and of their marriage, she shook her head without sadness, but with a profound conviction that she should not live to be his wife. There was something holy in her face; she was like one of Francia's or Perugino's saints, or like the picture which old chroniclers draw of "the dear St. Elizabeth of Hungary."

A very short time before her death she called him to her, and told him that this might be the last time she should see him, and that she wished to take leave of him then. She enjoined him to do in the world all the good she would have wished to do, and add daily to the treasure they had begun to lay up together in heaven. "She had made her meditation that morning," she said, "on the history of Martha and Mary, and felt as if he would say that she left him to do all the serving alone; but you will not grudge me, Adrien," she added, "that better part which I indeed have not chosen, but which has been chosen for me." She gave him much

advice, — amongst other things asked him to write the long work which he had since accomplished. She had a brother whom she dearly loved, and who had lost his faith. His conversion had been the object of her prayers and of her hopes, and now of her request to Adrien. She told him that she had never prayed for health or for any temporal blessing, but for one thing alone, and that she had even offered up her life to obtain it, that was, that he might lead a perfect life on earth, and do much for God and for the Church. "I know not," she added, "if He has accepted the sacrifice; it is delightful to me to hope it, and do you, Adrien, always act as if it were so accepted. In every temptation — not to sin only, but to faltering in the upward path — think of my early death, and remember that you have double work to do."

Still deeper thoughts and tenderer words she spoke, too solemn to be here repeated, and hitherto he had carried them in his heart, and they had borne fruit in his life. She remained his beau idéal of woman, and it was with almost a religious worship that he honoured her memory. He had not thought of love, or of marriage since. Sometimes he had felt yearnings for the religious life, but had not yet found in himself the vocation to it. He had not lived much in society, and no woman but Ida had ever made any impression upon him. Once, in compliance with

the wishes of his family, he had tried to like a young person whom they recommended him to marry. They thought she resembled his early love, and fancied she would captivate him, but she had only Ida's features without her soul, and he shrunk from the likeness as from a deception and a snare. On the night that in the course of a stroll through the park at Audley Place he had found Gertrude insensible and carried her home in his strong arms, he had only just seen that she was beautiful, or would be so when animation returned; when he heard from Lady Clara her name, and her family and home were described to him, he felt interested about her.

There were several reasons for his being so, and though it was as yet but a transient feeling, it was more than he had felt for any woman, except Ida. He remembered how, in Italy, Maurice Redmond used to talk to him about her, and his having once shown him a very odd clever letter she had written to him. When he began talking to her, he was a little startled sometimes, but on the whole attracted. As it was said before, from the first moment of their acquaintance he had so much unconscious influence over her, that her somewhat strange opinions and the peculiarities of her impetuous and yet reserved character were so much softened as only to make her original and amusing. She was as quick as lightning, understood in an instant anything he said to her, and astonished

him by the vivacity of her intelligence. Perhaps he thought her rather more *genuine* than she was. Perhaps there was a little more of self-knowledge than appeared on the surface of her captivating *laisser-aller*, but her feelings were genuine even if there was a little art sometimes in her way of conducting herself.

It is difficult to have strong volitions, to be excessively clever, to have great powers of self-command, and yet to be open as the day. Shallow waters are easily transparent — but it is rare to find a very deep and very transparent stream. His own character was such, but in both cases the exception is rare. Lady Clara had often spoken to him of Mr. Lifford, and that man's destiny had always been to him a subject of regret. It was positive pain to a nature like his to see blessings wasted, intellect thrown away, means of usefulness disregarded, and by one who could have done so much for all the objects he had most at heart. When he looked at the beautiful animated girl who seemed so ready to adopt all high views and aims, and to sympathise so warmly in everything great, useful, and noble, he wondered if she could not rouse her father from the torpid indifference in which he was sunk, and stimulate him to adopt another course; and this idea had induced him also to become well acquainted with her, and to endeavour to inspire her with such an ambition. By degrees he perceived or guessed what was the case: — that she had no belief

in her father's affection, and that if there had not been bitter passages in her life, at least there were sore corners in her heart. Those who have felt themselves how suffering can be turned, I had almost said into happiness and I will not unsay it, but at all events into a blessing, have a sort of yearning desire to make others and especially young people understand it. Bitterness is the worst sort of suffering, but perhaps when the right remedy is applied it is the most certainly to be cured. And by a few unpretending words, some instances quoted here and there from real life, he conveyed to her his own receipt for happiness; but in mixing up the draught he unconsciously put in an ingredient he had not intended. It was an intoxicating addition, and might nullify what in appearance it seemed to second.

As he was waiting in the drawing-room, on the Sunday morning after her departure, for the post-chaise that was to take him to Lifford Grange, he took up accidentally his own book which was lying on the table, and opened on the page where, in faint pencil-marks, she had drawn a key; and he read the Italian lines underneath it. "True," he said to himself, "that is the key to what seems at times such a problem to one's self — one's strength, and one's weakness." As he drove through the sombre avenue of Lifford Grange, and caught sight of the melancholy old mansion at the end of it, which, with the sullen-

looking view beyond, formed a striking contrast with the scenery between it and Audley Park, he thought what a strange flower had blossomed in that dull spot. As the post-chaise stopped, a servant came up to the door and showed him the way to the chapel, which was at the end of the wing which contained Mrs. Lifford's apartments. It was very small, but well arranged, and the candles on the altar were lighting at that moment. Gertrude was kneeling by the side of her mother's arm-chair, who, when she was well enough to leave her bed, heard mass from a kind of tribune on one side of the altar. One look she cast at the body of the chapel, and saw, with the emotion which a great joy after a moment's anxiety produces, Adrien kneeling and absorbed in prayer.

There is something more touching in a man's devotion than in a woman's; when it is earnest it is so real, so humble, and so deep. It seemed to her as if the light of heaven played round that noble head bowed down in intense adoration. Though she was looking at him, she knew that he would not look at her. *His* spirit was soaring far above earthly thoughts, and she was glad of it; she had understood at once in knowing him what theologians mean by perfection — a comparative term after all — but a necessary one to describe the angelic life which some of God's creatures are enabled to live on earth; and a glance from him at that moment would have disappointed her.

She turned away, and prayed earnestly herself, nor once looked again from the altar. After mass, she saw her mother comfortably established on her couch, and propped up by pillows.

"Now, Mamma, I will bring M. d'Arberg to see you. We will come in by the garden-door in the next room."

"You must let me rest for an hour, dear child, and then you may come."

"Very well, dearest, then I shall take him to see the house, if he wishes it, for Father Lifford will not be in the library for some time, I know. — Yes," she said to herself, as she went slowly across the hall, "I should like to take him to every part of this old house of mine" (for the first time she complacently called it her house), "so that the perfume of pleasant memories might attach itself to every corner of it."

When she opened the door of the drawing-room — that formal square room with its heavy furniture and cheerless aspect — it seemed too like a dream to see Adrien there. But there he was, and the window where he was standing was the first of the stations which her fancy meant to cherish. "Are you well, Lady-Bird?" he asked her kindly and warmly. "You have not been walking too much in the day, or reading too late at night?"

"I shut up my book every night as the clock strikes twelve," she said. "I am trying to keep rules; it is

hard work, but I hope there will be method in my madness at last."

"It is madness to waste health," he said with a smile, "at least without making a good bargain with it, — getting something more valuable in return."

"And information is not that, I suppose?"

"O no — not for its own sake. What a very peculiar place this is."

"What do you think of it?" she said, throwing open the window out of which they both leant.

"I don't dislike it, but I cannot flatter you either by praising or abusing it. But tell me, is the chapel as old as the house?"

"Not the one that is used now, but the one upstairs under the roof, which is now out of repair. There is near it one of the hiding-places for the priests which were used in the days of persecution."

"Will you show it me, in return for the stories of the catacombs which I told you the other day?"

"Yes, I will!" she eagerly exclaimed; and leading the way through long passages and winding staircases, continued, "I had no notion till I met the other day with a little book called 'Records of Missionary Priests,' of the heroic lives and deaths of these men, of whom some may have taken refuge in the very place I am going to show you. These accounts are quite sublime, although — or rather perhaps because — they are so simply given. But, M. d'Arberg, I cannot

endure their loyalty to Queen Elizabeth: it may have been fine, but it provokes me to death."

"You are given to rebellion. I have perceived that before."

"But you are not surely for passive obedience?"

"You must not make me talk politics *here*. I am afraid of the ghosts of your ancestors. But I do admire from my heart the absence of party-spirit in men who died for their faith, with less of earthly stimulus and sympathy than any other martyrs were ever cheered and supported by before. It was done in the discharge of an ordinary duty, all in their day's work; and their dying prayers for the Queen and the country appear less like great efforts of Christian virtue, than an absence of bitterness more surprising still. They were strangers and pilgrims; and to be thrust aside from the world, and hurried on to eternity, was an injury which hardly excited their resentment."

"But they gave up the out-posts too readily. They stipulated for nothing but the very citadel, and defended it only by dying."

"True," he answered, "it was an error, perhaps, but a noble and not an unchristian one. Is this the place?"

"It is," she exclaimed, "and we may well call it holy ground, for martyrs here, in Mrs. Hemans' words,

'Uncheer'd by praise
Have made the offering of their days,
And silently in fearless faith
Prepared their noble souls for death.'"

Adrien gazed with emotion into the dark recess, which was usually concealed by a sliding panel, which gave no outward sign of the existence of a hiding-place within. After an instant he turned to her and said, "I had often heard of these places of refuge, but had never seen one before. Your old house may be gloomy at first sight, but it speaks more to the soul than Audley Park." They went downstairs again, and sat upon the terrace. "Will you sit on this bench while I go and see if mamma is ready to receive you."

"No; but I will walk up and down here till you come back." In five minutes she returned again, and led him through the little library into Mrs. Lifford's room.

It was long since her mother had seen a stranger; and her cheek was flushed, and her voice a little tremulous as she spoke to him in Spanish, which was familiar to him as his own tongue. His manner was gentle to every one, but to that bruised and suffering being (and who could look upon her, and not feel that such she was) it was gentleness and tenderness itself. That manner, the tones of his voice, the expression in his eyes, were inexpressibly soothing to her. She had not been so addressed for years and years. Father Lifford was very kind, but he was rough and abrupt.

Gertrude had latterly been affectionate and attentive, but her high spirits and impetuous nature gave something startling to her very tenderness; while her husband's coldness and her son's formality were in another way depressing. She had been used to something so different in her childhood and early youth. There was a sound in Adrien's voice that reminded her of Assunta, the sister she had lost. She listened to him with a pleasure she could hardly account for, and he at once won her heart. "No wonder," she thought, "that Gertrude had found him charming, that he had made her long to be like him. Who would not admire that face? — who would not be fascinated by that voice, won by that perfect kindness, swayed by those speaking eyes, subdued by that matchless nobleness of countenance and of manner?" Such were her thoughts as she sat listening to him, and now and then addressing to him a few earnest words. They understood each other so well. He in the busy walks of life — she at her silent watch — had served the same master, and learned the same secrets. In her heart there rose a hope, a wish, at the strength of which she was alarmed; for she thought that she had learnt that great lesson — not to wish anything too intensely. But that he should like Gertrude, — that he should in time wish to marry her, — was a vision of happiness for that beloved child that rose irrepressibly before her. Such a heaven of bliss and of safety,

such a shelter through the storms of life, such an escape from dangers that would thicken on her path, in or out of her home!

When Adrien asked if he might come and see her again, she pressed his hand, and smiled assent. Never had he felt more sympathy for any one than for this pale suffering woman. Her eyes haunted him, and as Gertrude led the way back to the library he was silent and thoughtful. He turned to her half absently, and said something in Spanish. "I don't understand Spanish," she said, hastily. "Not your mother's tongue, Lady-Bird! Not that beautiful language which she speaks so eloquently! How is it possible that you have never learnt it." "It does seem strange to me now," she answered, colouring — and a resolution was taken at that moment. Not another day passed without her applying herself with a kind of passionate application to that study.

Father Lifford now joined them. He was not fond of Frenchmen, but he had made up his mind that Adrien was as little of one as possible, and he could not, in spite of himself, help liking him. They walked up and down the avenue discussing English politics, on which they agreed more than about those of the Continent. Gertrude slipped into her mother's room to hear her say that Adrien was charming; and then from her bedroom window she gazed on the yew-trees, as if they had suddenly been illuminated by the most

radiant sunshine. She wished the day not to advance — she dreaded to hear the luncheon-bell ring — every minute seemed a whole day of enjoyment. There was not a gesture of Adrien's that she did not watch; she knew from which tree he had plucked a branch, where he had let it fall from his hand, on what bench he had sat for a moment and traced a pattern on the sand, which of the gamekeeper's dogs he had caressed as it passed him, and where he had shaded his eyes with his hand to gaze on some distant point which Father Lifford was pointing out to him. At last the bell rang, and she went down to the dining-room. That table laid for three, how often she had sat down to it with a heart that felt as hard and dull as a stone! When Father Lifford said grace, she silently returned thanks that life was no longer what it had been to her, — thanks that a ray had shone upon it, and melted away the ice that had gathered round her heart. She was amused at observing how skilfully Adrien avoided those subjects on which he and Father Lifford would have been likely to disagree, and with what "Christian art" he sought to please the old man whom he respected.

"We are going to vespers at Stonehouseleigh," Father Lifford said to her, as they left the dining-room, "will you have the gamekeeper's pony and ride there?" She had done this once or twice before, and felt very grateful to him for proposing it now. When

she was lifted on the saddle, and gathering up the reins slowly moved from the door, Adrien walking by her side and now and then laying his hand on the pony's mane, or brushing away with a branch the flies that were teasing him, she thought of the day when with Edgar she had left that door for another ride, and one which led to consequences that made it an epoch in her life. "Don't you go and play us tricks again, Miss Gertrude," Father Lifford said to her; "mind your reins. Who knows but this old creature may take it into its head to rush off with you somewhere or other, if you leave it so entirely to its own inventions." She looked back with a smile of such sweetness that her whole countenance seemed changed, and the old man muttered to himself, "I believe the foolish mother was right after all, and that what the child wanted was a little happiness."

"I had forgotten to give you this note from Lady Clara," Adrien suddenly said, and drew it from his pocket. She read it, and turning to him her expressive eyes, she put it into his hands. "Am I to read it?" "Yes," she said, "you see she wants me to go back to Audley Park. I think mamma would let me go, but —" "But don't you wish to go?" She looked at him without answering, as if she were inwardly deliberating. She wished to guess his thoughts, she would have given anything to abide by his decision. But she did not venture to ask for his opinion. She

had not yet any hope that he cared for her. The very kindness of his manner, though she felt happy in it, was discouraging. The love she felt for him — for she could not disguise from herself that she loved him — was at that stage of its progress singularly unmixed with hope or fear. Its existence alone seemed enough for her happiness. With a strange humility she scarcely dared to look for a reciprocal affection from one whom she almost deified by the silent worship of her heart. To be something to him, to have reason to hope she should sometimes see him, that he would not altogether forget her, and that he might some day or other know how transformed she had been in thoughts, in feelings, and in conduct since she had known him, since his mind had spoken to hers, since a spark of that fire which burnt in his soul had animated hers: — this seemed enough for her; at least she thought so, but it was under a sort of infatuated belief that he would always be what he then was. The least touch of jealousy, the supposition or the report that he was turning his thoughts to marriage, that he was interested in any other woman more than in her, or that he might dedicate himself to the religious life, would all at once have opened her eyes and raised a storm in her soul.

But there is a lethargy as well as a fever in happiness; one often precedes the other, and on this day it seemed that as long as she could see him and hear

his voice, the future was nothing, the present all in all. Submission to him seemed her ruling desire. In a nature so rebellious and proud, this was the result of a mastering passion. But with that artless artfulness which characterised her, she did what perhaps served her purpose better than anything else. She answered after a pause: "I should like to go, but I will ask Father Lifford's advice. He will know what mamma would really wish." Adrien looked at her more than kindly — almost tenderly — and said, with his usual simplicity of manner: "I hope she will really wish you to go." Her heart bounded with delight. How lovely the lane through which they were passing at that moment seemed to her; — how blue the sky overhead, how sweet the clematis, or the branch of honey-suckle which, here and there, still remained in the hedges; — how fresh and balmy the air that caressed her cheek.

At one point of the road there was a fine view of distant country, and they stopped an instant to look at it. He said it was like one near his château in Normandy, and, for the first time, he spoke a little about his home. He had not been educated there, and it was more like a home to his brother, who was married, and lived in it with his wife and children;— every year he spent some time with them.

"And shall you never fix yourself there," she asked, unconsciously blushing as she did so.

"Perhaps," he said, "but I never make projects for the future, — not that I think it wrong, but it does not occur to me to look beyond the work of the moment. I like that line in a little book I saw on Lady Clara's table the other day: 'I do not ask to see the distant scene, one step enough for me.'"

"And I," Gertrude said, "am always, or at least always was thinking of the distant scene, and during many years would have liked to '*sauter à pieds joints*' the steps between me and it."

"But not now?" he said inquiringly.

"Oh, not so much now," she answered hastily. "I am very willing to let time go as slowly as it pleases just at present. But it is apt to hurry when we least wish it, and to creep when we would hasten it. Like this old pony, who would not go out of a foot's pace last Sunday, when I was late, and to-day seems bent on walking fast, as if on purpose to tire you." After a pause she said, "I am almost surprised that your present existence suits you."

"And how do you know it does?"

"Because I do not understand why you should stay at Audley Park if you did not like it."

"But why should you think I do not. It is very pleasant to leave for a while one's own particular ways and habits, and see people who have not looked upon things through the same glasses as one's self. They may be better or worse spectacles; but a peep

through them always shows one something new or useful."

"Ay," she said eagerly, "that is the reason I suppose that some very good people are provoking. I suppose it is those who have never used but one pair of spectacles," and her eyes, perhaps unconsciously, glanced at those which Father Lifford was at that moment wiping.

Adrien smiled and said, "Oh, but for *use* one pair is enough, if the glasses be good."

"I should have thought that the very thing I like so much at Audley Park would have bored you, — its busy idleness."

"I think idle business worse."

"But you are neither idly busy, nor busily idle."

"I hope not always; but you know the old saying, 'All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.'"

"Ay, but I think your *play* would be of a different kind. I can understand your liking to travel, or to —"

"Well, I am not sure that I had not rather spend a week amongst new people — if they are at all out of the common way — than see new places, though that is amusing in its way, too."

"But beautiful scenery you delight in, I am sure."

"That," he answered, "is like fine music in a church. When you get it and your mind is in harmony it almost amounts to ecstacy, but there are few places where a similar effect is not within your reach.

I doubt whether the Alps or the Italian lakes have awakened higher feelings of enjoyment than the nearest meadow, with buttercups and daisies, near London or Manchester, and I am sure that a flower-pot in a window has given as much pleasure as the parterre at Audley Park."

"Then I suppose," she said in a very low voice, "that you think a person might be happy at Lifford Grange?"

They were just stopping at the gate of the little churchyard. He took the pony's mane in his hand and did not answer for an instant or two, and then said, with a shade of emotion in his voice, "Yes, I think so." She was startled, not by the words, but by something in his manner. Was it possible that he was not so calmly and so merely kind to her as she had fancied, or was it that he was longing to tell her something of his thoughts on happiness, such as he understood it? She knew that there was often that kind of emotion in his countenance, when the subject nearest to his heart was alluded to, and his eyes — not his lips — bore witness to his deepest feelings. It might have been one or the other of these causes, she knew not which, and now their walk was at an end, and she could not investigate this point any farther. While she knelt at church by his side, she once thought if ever she became his wife, how easy a thing it would be to be good, — how every duty

would be a pleasure, and life a foretaste of Heaven; and for the first time she poured forth passionate supplications that this blessing might be vouchsafed to her, but they too much resembled in their spirit the prayer of Rachel, when she exclaimed, "Give me children or else I die!" There is something fearful in such prayers, and when they are heard, and the hand grasps what it has wildly sought, then is the time to tremble.

When they came out of the chapel, and Father Lifford was still in the sacristy, Gertrude sat down on her old favourite seat near the gate, and Adrien took leave of her; the post-chaise had been sent to meet him there. "Then I shall tell Lady Clara that you will send an answer. I hope it will be to say that you will come, but anyhow I shall see you again before I go to Ireland, — that is, if I may do next Sunday as to-day." She was looking her assent to those last words, when the organist passed them. He hurried by without speaking, but Adrien called out, "Halloa, Maurice, are you here? I might have guessed that nobody but you would have played that voluntary just now in this small place. Are you going back to Audley Park? I can give you a lift." "Thank you," said Maurice, with a singular smile. "You have given me many through life;" and then he muttered to himself, "and much good they have done me." Then passing his hand over his forehead, he ex-

proached Gertrude, who shook hands with him. The coldness of his hands struck her, and the dim look of his eyes.

"I am going to sleep at home to-night," he said, "but to-morrow I return to Lifford Grange — I mean to Audley Park."

"Here is Mary!" Gertrude exclaimed. "M. d'Arberg, you ought to know her, and her mother, Mrs. Redmond." She went up to them, and Adrien followed her. Maurice stood at a little distance whilst they spoke together.

"Yes," he said to himself, "it must be so, and fool that I am to mind it. Did I ever think she could be mine? Would I, if I could, give up Mary? Would I be false to the dearest and holiest affections of my childhood and my youth? Did I not snatch her hand last night, and imprint a thousand kisses upon it? Did I not again speak of our marriage? What a brute I am not to feel always as I did then! Is my hand such a rich gift that I should give it her without my heart? But my heart is hers. Yes, all that deserves to be called heart! O, Lady-Bird, Lady-Bird! I could almost curse you for standing between me and duty, and happiness and Heaven also. For but now, in church, to see her kneeling by d'Arberg's side drove devotion away, and awoke the worst feelings in my breast. Curse *her!* Do men curse what they adore? I don't know; all I know is, that if she ever speaks to me

again with that smile of hers, — if she expects me to talk to her of Mary as if she were not Mary's worst enemy, I may tell her something of my sufferings, and if that is to insult her, let her complain to d'Arberg, and make him turn my enemy too. Fool — idiot — that I was to be always talking to her about him! Could I suppose she would see him, and not love him? Oh, that he may make her suffer what I suffer!"

As he mentally expressed this wish, his eyes accidentally fixed themselves on the cross, near which he was standing, and he was struck to the heart with that silent lesson. He went into the church, and burying his face in his hands, remained there a while. Perhaps, during those few moments of silence and of meditation, he had a glimpse into his own real feelings; he saw for an instant the utter selfishness, the heartless ingratitude of his conduct; a transient repentance passed over the surface of his mind, and when Mary softly went up to him and whispered: "Mother is waiting," he raised his head, and his eyes were full of tears. She saw that he had been weeping, and he was surprised at her suddenly stopping and wringing her hands, as if she could hardly struggle any longer with some intense anxiety. "Mary?" he said, with a kind of inquiring expostulation. "I cannot endure *that*," she said hurriedly, "*anything* but that, when I know —" she stopped and her manner changed.

"Come, make haste, dear boy — we shall be late for tea, and I can endure anything but *that*," she repeated gaily, putting her arm in his, and holding out the other to her mother. They went home together, and he appeared calmer and happier that evening than he had done for a long time.

END OF VOL. I.